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ABSTRACT

Issues of the newsletter, "Dialogue," covering 7 years in the 1980s are compiled in this publication, which contains an introductory section that lists the articles published in each issue. The first issue of "Dialogue," which appeared in April, 1982, explains the Dialogue Journal Project at the Center for Applied Linguistics. Subsequent issues cover various themes related to dialogue journals, such as the following: applications; research; uses in higher education; uses with students with special needs; dialogue journals as a reading event; applications in English-as-a-Second-Language settings; developing literacy in refugee, migrant, and adult basic education; teacher benefits, strategies, and time; helping students change attitudes and behaviors; interactive writing in deaf education; international settings; teacher education; bilingual education; elementary education; and promises and practices of content area instruction. An 8-page history of dialogue journals is included, as well as abstracts of 16 research studies, and a bibliography that contains approximately 75 references. (LB)

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Dialogue

Newsletters from 1982 - 1989

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Plus

A Recent History of Dialogue Journals

Abstracts of Major Research Projects and Dissertations

List of Dialogue Journal Publications

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1982 - 1989

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THE DIALOGUE JOURNAL NEWSLETTER

Center for Applied Linguistics
3520 Prospect St.,
Washington, D. C. 20007
Contact Jana Staton for Information

Editor: Becky Michael
Volume 1, number 1
April 1982

Dear Friends,

There are so many of you, all trying out dialogue writing in new settings, that I can no longer keep up by personal letter and feel guilty about not sharing more of what you are doing with others. This newsletter is an attempt to remedy the situation. Included you will find brief notes about the Dialogue Journal Project, excerpts from an interview with the original dialogue journal teacher, and tidbits from letters and calls which I have had from all of you.

Your help is needed, though, to make this newsletter successful. Write back and tell us what your experience has been and we will include it in the next edition (to appear as soon as enough of you respond). By sharing our experiences, our insights, our knowledge perhaps we can begin a dialogue of our own. I look forward to hearing from all of you.

Jana Staton
CAL

It's Done! Dialogue Writing as a Communicative Event - Jana Staton, Roger Shuy, Joy Kreeft and Mrs. R.

This report consists of an overview, Volume I, presenting the study purposes, findings and conclusions and implications for writing and for classroom interaction. Eleven research papers (in Volume II) present analyses of language functions, types of conversational discourse which develop, and the effects of private, non-graded, interactive writing on the growth of elaboration, ability to reason about problems, and topic understanding. The teacher's own perspective on the use of dialogue journals in the classroom is presented in the 12th paper of Volume II.

CAL is reproducing both volumes at cost: Vol. I is $8.00, Vol. II is $14.00, but our special discount offer is only $25.00 for both volumes, (including prepaid shipping. (If volumes are bought separately, include $1.86 for volume I or $2.59 for volume II to cover shipping and handling.)

Excerpt from an Interview with Leslee Reed, the Original Dialogue Journal Teacher

The following questions and answers are part of an interview that was done with Leslee Reed, the original dialogue journal teacher, in September 1981.

Interviewer: I want to ask you what you get out of journal writing?

Mrs. R.: I don't think I've ever grown so much in my life as I have this year in understanding the problems of different cultures, different races, trying to fit into this pattern of American life. Plus, as a teacher and having taught for a great many years, I'm sometimes so sure when I'm teaching a lesson that it does me good to see sometimes in the journals something that I totally missed. That I have used a cliche or an idiom that literally blocked out everything I taught up to that point. It's like a challenge. It's a puzzle.

Int.: Is it very important for students and teacher to share personal information, that doesn't have much to do with their learning?

Mrs. R.. I think all learning has to take place through a mind that's as unfettered and as open as possible. If we can help to open their minds and unfetter their worries and agonies by sharing or by letting them put them out on paper, then learning can begin.

I think another thing about the dialogue journals which teachers might not realize is the degree to which it allows you to individualize their work. I think now I find that journal writing is sort of the kernel of my teaching. When I sit down to do journals, I am doing a kind of resume of my day, and of each child. For me it .....

(cont. on page 2)

(teacher interview continued)
makes my whole school year flow, because I have a constant finger on the pulse of the children. I know quite accurately what every child is doing and not doing.

Int.: What needs to be said about the journals?

Mrs. R.: I think if I could have... everyone see the love that goes into the journals and not just on my part, but on the children's part too. The love, the respect, the mutuality of goals, the feelings that we develop for each other. It's so worthwhile, it's so good. I just think any teacher who allows herself to get this involved with individuals can't help but be enriched by just learning more about each individual.

New Research Notes

Dialogue Journals with Deaf Students

Jana Staton is now consulting at Gallaudet College, the national college for the deaf in Washington, D. C., to develop dialogue journal writing for deaf students, at both college and precollege levels. Deaf students learn sign language as their first language written English is a second language for them, and one which they find very difficult to learn, especially when they don't have opportunities to use it in functional situations. Faculty from the English Department and Counseling are interested in trying out dialogue journals and three high school English teachers from the Model Secondary School are already using them with their classes. Research proposals to study the acquisition of English language in dialogue writing are planned, and we would be interested in hearing from teachers who might have already used a dialogue journal with deaf or other communication impaired students.

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Language Acquisition - ESL

A research project is now in progress to analyze the acquisition of English in dialogue journal writing. The study focuses on the dialogue writing over one year's time of a sixth grade class of non-native speakers of English in Los Angeles, California. Mrs. Leslee Reed, the collaborating teacher for Staton, Shuy and Kreeft's original dialogue journal study (1979-81) has continued to write in dialogue journals with her 1980-81 and 1981-82 students, none of whom are native speakers of Eng. Preliminary analysis of the journals shows a dramatic shift in the students' writing over a year's time, from an initially limited grasp of grammatical structures and a narrow range of topics and language functions, to the eventual use of complex structures and effective expression of a wide range of topics and functions. As the year progresses, both the students' and teacher's writing demonstrates the amazing degree to which the students become comfortable with (and confident about) their ability to communicate in English.

Oral language samples are also being collected once a month from several students, so that comparisons can be made between the development of oral competence with competence in written English over time. (For details, contact: Joy Kreeft, CAL)

Japanese Students Learning English

Shelley Gutstein, an Applied Linguistics Ph.D. candidate at Georgetown University and an experienced ESL teacher, tried the dialogue journals with a class of Japanese college students learning English in an intensive 8 week summer program. Shelley is now studying the language variation, self disclosure, and topic development in the journals for her dissertation at GU. She found the journals very useful in getting to know the students, even in the short period of time.

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Note: We'd love to have samples of your dialogue journals, but please send just excerpts which you think others might learn from, also, please be sure you have both parents' and students' permission (for students under 18) to share them. Give us a pseudonym for the student which reflects cultural background. And, please let us know how you would like to be identified.

Some Applications of DJ's

Foreign Language

Dialogue journals are being used by Ceil Lucas (CAL) in a 12-week college-level Advanced English Composition course at Lorton Reformatory (D.C. Department of Corrections). The class meets once a week for 2 hours and students write in the journals for the last 20 minutes of each class. While the first topic was initiated by the teacher with the questions "What do you like to read? Why?", each dialogue is clearly taking its own course as the semester progresses.

In addition, Lucas has used dialogue journals in a ten-week Introductory Italian course (second semester). The class meets 3 hours, once a week. Here again, the first topic was teacher-generated.

The journals have been a very useful teaching tool in these two language-diverse situations, one with dialect speakers and one with second language learners. In neither case does the teacher correct or overtly reference language differences - rather, use is made of modelling vocabulary items or grammatical constructions. The journals are successful in these situations precisely because the focus is *not* on language forms, but on communication. This may be particularly important in a language learning situation for adults

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Jose Goncalves is using dialogue journals in an advanced conversation class in Portuguese at Georgetown University. The students write in their journals in Portuguese once a week; Jose responds to them and returns their journals in the next class. The students are free to choose their own topics and Jose reports that typically they write about more personal topics than they discuss in the classroom. This results in a special benefit because the teacher and his students feel closer and he says that the dialogue journals have definitely increased teacher-student rapport.

Primary and Upper Elementary

Quinda Strube, a bilingual primary teacher in Riverside, California, has been using dialogue journals with her 1st and 2nd graders, some of whom write as much as 6th graders. She has found journals to be a good way to help students practice both Spanish and English (her 1st graders are using Spanish; her 2nd graders are moving into English). Students who were relying on the aide to dictate stories quickly began writing independently in the journals.

Here's a sample of one of the delightful topic-focused conversations in these journals.

A: Dear Miss Strube: I love Sonia because she's pretty would you tell Sonia that she's pretty and tell her that I love her. OK! Juan.

T. Why do you want *me* to tell her? Do you really want me to tell her? I think she's pretty, too!

S: Dear Miss S. Yes I want you to tell her Please porque tengo Wehwanga (Because I am embarrassed.)

T: But won't you be embarrassed even if I tell her? Would you like T______ to tell her?

S: Dear Miss Strube: Forget it. I just give her a ring and a necoless and I'm going to give her more things.

T: What do you want me to forget? Did you give a ring and necklace to Sonia? What did she do?

S: She said thank you and I said you welcome and that all.

Kristina Lindberg, Wilmington Park Elementary School, has combined dialogue journals with Sylvia Ashton-Warners Language experience approach for her 1st grade class. Each child begins by choosing personal "key" words, and the teacher, after writing the word, begins writing phrases in the child's journal. The child copies or makes the phrase into a sentence, and the teacher responds. This continues until the possibilities of that personal key word have been exhausted, and the child asks for a new word. This information came to us from Leslee Reed - we hope to hear from Kristina directly about how it's going.

Mona Ramirez and several other teachers in Riverside have been using dialogue journals for two years at the elementary level. As old hands, we'd like to know what you think of it now?

High School

How can you manage dialogue journals at the high school level?

Gretchen Vasquez, in Coachella, California, began two years ago by encouraging her ESL students to write her a note or letter if they wanted to and promising to write back. The next year she chose 2 classes and had them write once a week, on different days. She found that she became like a friend, and the dialogue moved from newsy, superficial writing into more significant topics. Many of her students use English for academic concerns but switch to Spanish for more personal topics. When she tried it a second year with the same group of students, there was a drop off of interest and length--there may be limits!

Janey Engelman Lisenby, in La Quinta, California has also been using the journal with her Basic Skills class, on a once a week basis.

At the Model Secondary School for the Deaf (at Gallaudet College, D.C.) 3 English teachers, Janet Rothenberg, Cindy Puthoff, and Mary Martone, all deaf themselves, began dialogue journals about a month ago, and are very excited about their students' response--one teacher reports that quiet, passive students are communicating more in the journal (a second language) than in class (Sign Language)! The students are given freedom to write as often as they want during the week--since MSSD classes are small, this is manageable and gives the teacher an indication of engagement. The teachers are planning to write up their experience.

A number of high school teachers at the Breadloaf Rural Teachers of English program who were in workshops on dialogue journal writing last summer went home with plans to try it out - We'd love to hear about it, as high school teaching loads make individual interaction more problematical. Any solutions?

Essay Dialogues

Wilmington, California, English teachers picked up the idea from a workshop with Leslee Reed and came up with an interesting adaptation. They write back with questions and comments about the content of the essay (instead of corrections) on first drafts of each student's essays, and the student responds. When questions and ideas have been worked through in several exchanges, the student goes about revising. Teachers reported that the average length of time for students to revise an assignment was a month, before dialoguing. Now it's down to a week or two, and students request more chances to write dialogues.

College/Graduate School

One of the most interesting and unexpected spin-offs of dialogue journals has been their use by college instructors with their own students.

Bill Stokoe, at Gallaudet College, began using dialogue journals last year in his research seminars on American Sign Language, which included a mixture of deaf, hearing-impaired and normal hearing students. Bill says, "What surprised me right at the start was the pleasure I took from reading my students' journal entries and from replying to them directly. Instead of finding it one more of the many tasks to be done, or put off, I found myself hurrying back to the office to read each day's entries as soon as possible, to see what this interesting person I saw across the classroom was saying to me or asking about. I also found that the few minutes that it took to read and reply were among the best minutes of the day. I never got to know the students in my class so well. With the dialogue journals I stopped worrying about how to teach the class to meet all their needs. Each one through his or her journal was getting individual instruction and, from what they wrote in the journals, very much appreciating it. Naturally, with a happily progressing class, I was a happy teacher. I doubt I will ever teach without dialogue journals again. They don't increase a teacher's burdens, they lighten them.

Roger Shuy, Georgetown University, tried the journals out with his linguistics field methods class, he asked his students to use the journal as a means of recording their observations of fieldwork projects, and then reflecting, asking questions (even complaining!). Roger describes his experiences.

"I've always been rather close to my grad students but I've never felt closer than I did that semester. What was shocking to me, however, was that the students made clear to me in their journals exactly where they were in their development. This enabled me to individualize my struction,in their journals, but also in the class itself, in ways I had never done before. Every teacher has general assumptions about the progress of the class as a whole based on clues given by a few. I discovered something that I suppose I should have known - not all students were at the place I thought they were. Some only caught on to the central concepts at the very end. This knowledge, revealed privately in their journals but not made openly in the class, guided me in teaching all 12 of them in different aspects of the course that they needed. I believe I did as much teaching in the journals as I did in the seminar meetings.

Vic Rentel, Ohio State University, College of Education, thought that dialogue writing would be a good way to develop understanding and keep in touch with teachers taking a graduate level practicum on classroom supervision. It has been good--the enrollment doubled and the experience was as exciting for Vic as for the students.

Vic speculates that in addition to the learning and awareness which the act of writing itself brings about, the bonds of trust established in the dialogue journals helped these adults to take greater risks in encountering new knowledge and new procedures. Plus, he suggests, "supervising teachers must have strong skills in interpersonal communication. Ordinary expository writing, with its explaining function, may tend to obliterate the kind of interpersonal language supervisors need to have. The dialogue journal draws on and encourages the rich *interpersonal* function of oral language. I think it is ideal for developing the skills I want in supervising teachers."

Interactive Writing - Different Formats, Different Partners

A close cousin of student-teacher dialogue journals is the practice of having students initiate a continuous correspondence with another student in a journal or letter format.

Amanda Branscombe, of Auburn High School, Auburn, Alabama, has paired a class of 11th and 12th graders with another class of 9th grade basic writing students, and offered them the opportunity of writing letters to one another, once a week, on topics of their own choosing, without teacher grades or comments. Her students keep this conversation going all year - sharing experiences, offering advice and support.

Research on a sample of these letters by Jim Marshall of Stanford University found growth in *length* of entry, number and type of *cognitive processes* used, and text *coherence* as students became more knowledgeable about and comfortable with their audience, and as they mutually negotiated an agenda of topics for discussion. Jim and Amanda are writing a paper on the results.

Anne Herrington, now at SUNY, Albany, reports a similar practice worked with a class of basic writers in a junior college, using a journal rather than letter format. Once the students got started, they kept it going without any urging--all Anne did was arrange the initial pairings, and collect and deliver the journals each class period. (Students did not 'know' their partners, except in the journals.)

Dialogue journal writing does not need to be confined to a school setting. The staff members and residence supervisors of Group Homes for mentally impaired adults in Maryland will meet in April to explore the uses and potential benefits of dialogue journal writing in the Group Home situation. Dialogue writing between a Group Home supervisor and the residents of the home will provide the opportunity for ongoing, open communication, free from the social

(cont. on page 6)

(Group Homes continued)
constraints that accompany oral, face-to-face communication. It is hoped that the dialogue writing will lay a foundation for increased oral communication.

Summer Conference: Benefits to the Teachers

We've talked a lot about the benefits to the students of having them keep a dialogue journal, but all of us who've tried it as instructors do it as much for ourselves, as for the students. Leslee Reed is now giving workshops on the dialogue journals as an 'anti-teacher burnout' method.

What are the benefits to teachers--individualizing instruction is one, and reducing discipline problems another. We'd like to hold some informal get togethers where we can articulate and share the values to the teacher - US! - of keeping dialogue journals with our classes.

Leslee Reed plans to visit Washington, D. C. in late June and we hope to hold one such working conference for a day while she's here, at the Center for Applied Linguistics. Date, time, and format aren't set, but we'd like to know who would be interested in attending from the East Coast area. If you come, you'll be asked to share your experiences - that's the price of admission!!

A similar conference in California may be possible again, as an opportunity for teachers at all levels to learn from each other.'

What Do I Tell My Friends? - A Teacher's Handbook.

Explaining the concept of dialogue writing is simple - and very difficult. Teachers with intuitive sense about communication and language seem to pick it up by osmosis, or may have already been doing it. But it's easy to miss the uses -- so Leslee Reed and Jana Staton are now working on a teacher's handbook, to provide both a practical guide for doing it, and the concepts and theory which make it work. The Center for Applied Linguistics is interested in publishing it.

A tentative outline of the handbook, subject to much revision, is as follows:

I. What is a Dialogue Journal?
II. How Can It Help My Students?
III. How Can It Help Me?
IV. How Do We Get Started?
  -strategies for initiating and maintaining it
V. How Do I Respond?
VI. A Look at Dialogue Journal Writing in Different Settings.
VII. Some Common Questions Teachers Ask.

If any of you could share with us your strategies for getting it started in different situations, or ideas you have about why it works, it would help us to address different problems and needs. We'll try to share what you send in the newsletter, and use it in the handbook.

Back to the question of what do I tell my friends when they ask, 'What do we talk about? Two questions which are useful to ask a friend who is considering trying it are these. They focus on the journals as a real communicative event.

1. What do you want to know about your students, that you don't have a chance to learn in regular classroom interaction? What do they want to know about you?

2. What do you need and want to communicate to your students - about learning, growing up, mastering a language - that you don't get a chance to say in your regular classroom interactions. What do your students need to tell you?

'Great' Dialogue Journal Moments

from Mrs. Reed's journals

S: Mrs. Reed I think you get 7 son and dother. Did you?

T. No! I have one son and one daughter! That is my family. But I like my class at Alexandria--they are like my sons and daughters.

S: You don't what do you have! I don't belive it looks you have 2 dog's and 2 turtles and, 1 cat so looks you have 1 son 1 dother the animals is 5 so you got 7 son and dother see that.

T: Oh! No! I see what you mean about my family! You were counting my animals, too!

DON'T FORGET - WRITE BACK TO US AND TELL US YOUR EXPERIENCES. ALSO LET US KNOW IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN THE SUMMER WORK_SHOPS.

THE NEWSLETTER ABOUT

Dialogue Journals

Editor: Becky Michael, CAL

Volume I, No. II

HIGHLIGHTS IN THIS ISSUE

*A special prepublication offer for the Dialogue Journal Handbook. See the last page. Please share this flyer (and the newsletter) with other teachers and administrators. Prepublication prices are good only until January 1983

*Tips on how to prevent this from being the last issue!!

*Benefits to the Teacher - Proceedings of the CAL conference on how dialogue journals help the teacher!

NEWS ABOUT THE NEWSLETTER

With the end of our NIE grant, this newsletter has become a voluntary effort on our part, to stay in touch with people around the country (and overseas) and to share with others the information you have been sending us. If there are to be any more issues, we need some volunteering from our readers in TWO WAYS:

THE FIRST WAY YOU CAN HELP IS........We need more NEWS ...general comments on the problems, joys, and benefits of using dialogue journals. This issue is mostly devoted to the theme "Benefits to Teachers." We have selected topics for the next two issues and especially invite you to send in information about them. We'll even call you back if you send a note asking for a "personal" dialogue just give us numbers where you can be reached at night or on Saturdays. The next two topics will be: (1) What do students say? - Student comments and reactions, both written and oral, about their dialogue journal experiences, offer us really important insights into why the journals work, and how to make them even more useful. (And not just glowing tributes, either...student criticisms are even more interesting.) One issue will pull together all the comments we have and any you send. Please give your students a suitable "pseudonym" and include age and any personal context. (2) Problems - Here's a chance to bring up problems. If you'll write down your questions or problems and send them in, we'll try to answer as many as we can, and print those we can't for others to answer. If you need an opening sentence, try "Dear Leslee,..."

THE SECOND WAY YOU CAN HELP IS........We need a small contribution from everyone on our mailing list (now over 300 names) to cover the mailing costs of these next two issues and to let us know who really wants to receive the newsletter. So... the next issue will be sent to those who send in $1.00 to cover postage and production costs for two more issues. We can handle actual cash, if you must send a check make it out to Jana Staton. We need your response of news and contribution BY DECEMBER 1, 1982.

(There's a handy form on the top of page 2 to help you out!. Thanks!)

THE HANDY FORM

To: Becky Michael, Dialogue Journal Newsletter, Center for Applied Linguistics,
3520 Prospect St., N. W., Washington, D. C. 20007

Yes, I would like 2 more issues. Here's $1.00 and my best mailing address.

____

____

____

Here's some news for the student reactions issue.

or: Here's my problem:

CONFERENCE ON BENEFITS TO TEACHERS

> "Why do you do them? How will they help my teaching? What will I get in return for spending several hours a week reading and responding to each student?"

If you're already using dialogue journals, those are some of the questions other teachers may have asked you. If you're thinking about using them, those may be questions you've asked yourself.

This issue of the newsletter focuses on the benefits to us as instructors of keeping dialogue journals. In June, when Leslee Reed was visiting Washington, D. C., we held an informal conference at the Center for Applied Linguistics for teachers in this area who had started using dialogue journals. The conference helped us all understand that there are substantial benefits for teachers: Leslee Reed calls the journals her "survival technique" -- they keep me from burning out as a teacher.

The conference documented how the dialogue journal contributes to the process of education itself, and adapts itself to the goals and needs of each teacher. We can't reproduce here the enthusiasm and energy in the presentations, but we will devote this issue to highlights from each presentation, and we have included as many samples from dialogues at different age levels as we have room for. We hope that this brief synthesis of the conference presentations will broaden your understanding of why we find ourselves saying "I wouldn't ever teach without the dialogue journals."

AGENDA

Welcome, Introductions and Goal Setting
    Jana Staton
The Dialogue Journal as an Anti-Teacher
    Burnout Technique : Leslee Reed
Elementary/Secondary Panel Discussion
    Joyce Saville, 2nd Grade
    Selma Horowitz, Kindergarten
        (presented by Jana Staton)
    Susan Veitch, 8th Grade English
ESL Panel
    Joyce Kreeft, Adult Business English
    Shelley Gutstein, Japanese ESL
    Richard Vann, College ESL (GW)
    Christine Meloni, College ESL
    Linda Mazer, College ESL
    Nina Turitz, College ESL
Content Areas/Diversity Panel
    Roger Shuy, Graduate Fieldwork
        Methods
    Ceil Lucas, Lorton Prison (College
        Writing)
    Jose Goncalves, Portuguese (FL)
    Bill Stokoe Research Seminar (Deaf
        and HI students)
    Jessie Roderick, Teacher Education
        Class
General Discussion on Benefits to the
    Teacher

KEYNOTE SPEECH BY LESLEE REED:

Leslee Reed, in her keynote speech to the conference, spoke about how the dialogue journals had become for her an "anti-burnout" technique.

"Have you ever felt you were the one who ended up in your classroom with a full class, the mandate to teach ALL, complete all surveys, forms, questionnaires and, oh, yes, document everything (being accountable is important), yet do it all with a smile, meet parents, attend meetings, and be so enthused about your work that you radiate? After all a good teacher will/can/should! It sure leads to that "What's the use?", "No way can I keep this up!", "Just not enought time!" feeling. If you have, you're not alone. Here, for me, is the answer. I am no longer the automatic form filler-inner! I become, through Dialogue Journals, a real person with thoughts, ideas and a really alive audience "listening" to just me!"

"It is obvious that my years of teaching are many. So many of my colleagues have burned out, leaving our profession the poorer for their moving into other fields. Adjustments to the 'new' techniques, the 'new' taxonomy, the 'new' addition to the curriculum, the multitude of innovations aimed at improvement of staff, all become tolerable because of my security blanket, the Dialogue Journals."

In her speech, Leslee makes it clear that using dialogue journals has helped her keep her enthusiasm for teaching. Leslee goes on to list some of the many benefits of using the dialogue journal: "getting an immediate response to my ideas, being asked genuine questions about myself, and developing a common bond of understanding and trust, which makes my classroom a friendly instead of a lonely place." She also demonstrated how effective the journals are in reaching the bilingual child and adapting instruction to the needs of very gifted and of newly emigrated students.

"I always know what's going on in their thinking and their lives that might affect their work, and I know who's ready for learning, so I can suggest new assignments.

How can such enjoyment be work and so valuable at the same time? It causes forms, surveys, bulletins to seem so unimportant. I'm dealing with real issues and my students know I am real. We are learning together as each of us is getting a direct, immediate response. We are human and not a bit or bite in some computer program! I invite you to try Dialogue Journals for the joy, the insights, the laughter and for the opportunity to be yourself!"

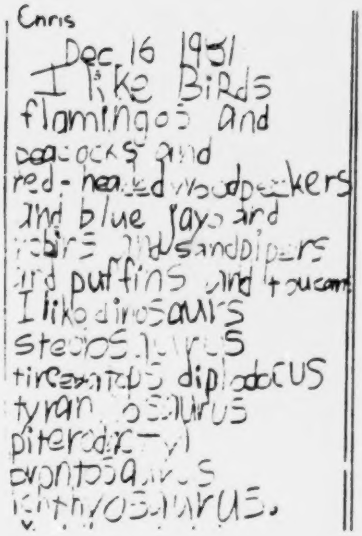
ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY PERSPECTIVES

> "You need to write something
> that says what you want it to say."

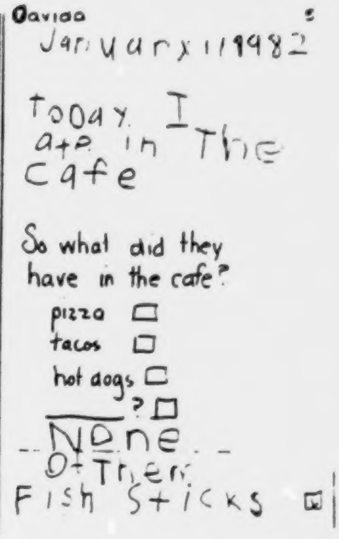
Selma Horowitz, a kindergarten-first grade teacher at Mar Vista Elementary School, Los Angeles, could not attend, but sent along some wonderful examples of her beginning writers' work to share with us. Selma found that the dialogue journal helped all her students "break into print," because even a first word or a sentence received an immediate response. Her five and six year olds were quite able to write full pages (in a small journal) by the end of the year. She also observed that slower students learned from observing others, even though they thought they "couldn't" write! Selma reports that "I've never gotten to know a class so well" - and this evaluation comes from a teacher with many years of successful teaching experience.

In the actual examples reproduced on the next page we can see the diversity of discourse styles among 5 and 6 year olds and their ability to carry out conversations in writing after only a few months of daily opportunity. The most impressive example of writing development is Erik's journal. Selma comments that Erik was slow at getting into reading and writing, and for the first month would just copy the same one sentence in his journal - "I like ______________." Then on November 1[illegible] he sat next to a boy who wrote a whole paragraph. Erik's first try at discourse is a creative mixture of letters. Selma's brilliant,

Facsimile Excerpt (Reduced) from Dialogue Journals in Selma Horowitz' K-1 Class, 1981-82.

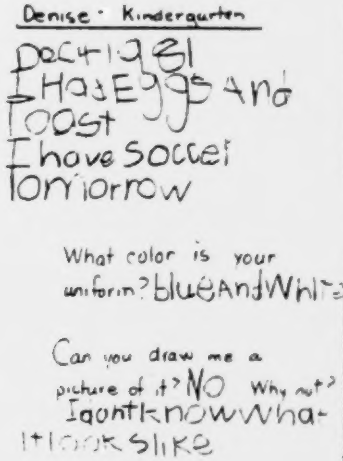


Chris
Dec 16 1951
I like BiRds
flamingos and
peacocks and
red-headed woodpeckers
and blue jays and
robins and sandpipers
and puffins and toucans
I like dinosaurs
stegosaurus
tirceratops diplodocus
tyrannosaurus
piterodactyl
brontosaurus
ichthyosaurus.



Davido
January 1 1982
today I
ate in The
cafe

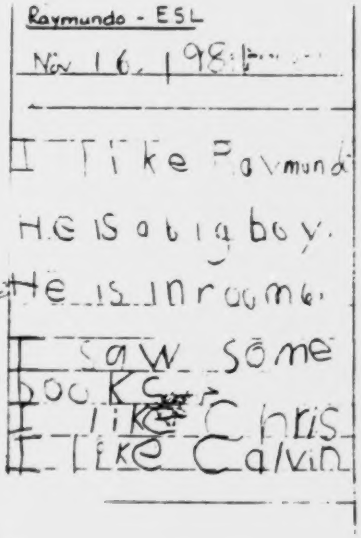
So what did they
have in the cafe?
pizza ☐
tacos ☐
hot dogs ☐
______? ☐
None
Of Them
Fish Sticks ☒



Denise · Kindergarten
Dec 4 1981
I Has Eggs And
Toost
I have Soccer
Tomorrow

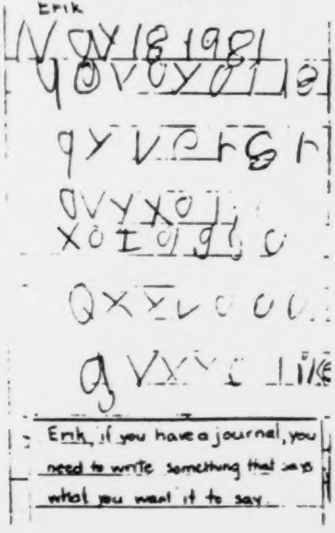
What color is your
uniform? blue And White

Can you draw me a
picture of it? NO Why not?
Idont know What
It looks like



Raymundo - ESL
Nov 16, 1981
I like Raymundo
He is a big boy.
He is in room 6.
I saw some
books
I like Chris
I like Calvin

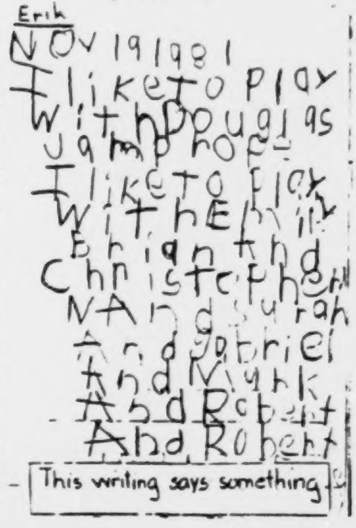
(Nov. 18)



Erik
Nov 18 1981
qOvOyOile
qyVergr
OVyXOi
XOIOgio
QXYvOOu
gVXYi like

Erik, if you have a journal, you
need to write something that says
what you want it to say.

(Nov. 19)



Erik
NOv 19 1981
I like To play
With Douglas
jump rope
I like To play
With hEnril
Brian And
Christopher
N And Sarah
And gabriel
And Mark
And Robert
And Robert

This writing says something

Page 3a

And now, for maximum contrast.......

an interaction from a dialogue journal in a graduate school seminar, courtesy of Roger Shuy.

(student)... Moving more cryptically along these general lines, I am beginning to ask myself what my intentions are in this game.... While I have experienced a certain sense of accomplishment and confidence-building (by conducting these interviews), I seem also to be plodding through a stage of questioning what this all has to do with real life. True, because this ~~course~~ course requires fieldwork, it is probably one of the most applicable ones in the whole program, but still, that nagging question remains. It may be that my expectations of my own learning capabilities are ridiculously impatient. I want to gather together everything I am learning and immediately do something "real" with it. I realize the absurdity of this, since many of these "skills" may not ever be utilized directly. Rather, they may incorporate themselves into the wandering course of my life, and be realized only over the span of time, itself.

As a result of this course, I feel continually emboldened and strengthened, as I approach and participate in the fieldwork aspect. On the other hand, as far as the rest of the program is concerned, I feel a kind of pointless and claustrophobic immersion into the ivory tower of academic theory. There is an obvious need for a solid "balance" here, as well. The dichotomy is very strong.

10-24-81

(instructor) If you look for the applicable, practical [illegible] use of linguistics, or any other science, to real life problems, you may not find that others have done it. Or even want to. There are people, good people, in the world whose strength is to theorize or speculate. There are others who are "mechanics" who grind new data through old models. There are precious few who seek out problems, application or theory. Maybe rather than "groaning" (perhaps too harsh) about not finding real life in theory courses, you should absorb the theory and think about how it could be useful to solve real problems. What can discourse theory, ethnography, pragmatics, variation theory do for problems? There must be some role or we wouldn't be teaching these things. There are steps in this process.

1. Seeing, observing
2. Seeking out data
3. Organizing data — finding patterns, analyzing
4. Selecting the theory that best serves the needs created by the problem
5. Doing the work

We try to provide experience, theory, etc at all levels. Sometimes we do it well and everyone is happy. Sometimes the student has to fill in the gaps that the teacher leaves out (from ignorance, carelessness or willfulness). But the burden is the student's to learn. All we can do is to put you in the context of the topic and tell you how we'd do it. But you and you and your way is the way you have to do it.

to-the-point suggestion seems to have facilitated a sudden 'fitting together' of several strategies--filling the page, 'saying something,' and building more information on a good opening line!

'It's Like Talking on the Telephone'

Joyce Saville, a second grade teacher in the Christina School District, Bear, Delaware, explained to her students that writing in dialogue journals is like talking on the telephone: "When you talk on the phone, you take turns talking. One person talks and then the other person answers. That's dialogue. I don't have enough time to talk to each of you every day, so I want you to write what you would like to say. I will take my turn tonight writing an answer." This analogy made for an easy and meaningful transition from oral to written communication and helped her young students understand that this kind of writing and reading would be useful.

Joyce started dialogue journals late in the fall, with a new class "hastily thrown together" as a result of a desegregation order. She stressed the greatest benefit to her was that the immediate personal contact in the journals helped develop a close, personal feeling with her students right away. Then teaching and learning became possible for this class, and for their teacher.

Students were given some time after recess to write in their journals and could keep them the rest of the afternoon to write more if they wished. Joyce made sure students knew they could "sound out words and write them out" without worrying if they didn't know how to spell them.

"Dialogue Journals with Junior High Students"

Susan Veitch, now on the national staff of the American Federation of Teachers, described how she managed a journal process in junior high school several years ago, working with five all-male English classes in an alternative school program in Ohio. She had each class write on a different day of the week and while she read all the journals each night, she wrote back only to those students who really seemed to need response and encouragement. With a few students, she kept up almost a daily dialogue, because of their special needs--an excellent way to use the dialogue process when student load is far too great to do it with everyone.

Susan reported two major benefits: "The journals helped me in managing each class - getting them settled down and ready to learn. By rotating the days in which I would read their journals (first period journals were turned in on Monday, given back on Tuesday, second period on Tuesday, etc.), I could manage to keep in direct touch with 140 students. I could choose to write back if a student really needed a response and to do it on a daily basis with a few. The daily dialogues with the students who really needed to talk to me helped me manage a hyperactive boy who could not communicate with me in any other way at first. I think the journal was the first time anyone had ever really listened to him. I would never have understood all the things that were going on with him without the journal. I was also able to help a student experiencing guilt over his brother's sudden death - otherwise his depression could have become suicidal."

Susan found that these two students who dialogued with her regularly out of personal needs benefitted academically. They became two of the best writers in the class and wrote a book of stories for children, which was incredibly well-written and moving.

DIALOGUE JOURNALS IN ADULT ESL PROGRAMS

The second panel consisted of six teachers in various adult ESL programs in the Washington, D.C. area.

"The Journal is a Bridge"

Christine Meloni used dialogue journals during the spring semester, 1982, in her advanced composition ESL class at George Washington University, in Washington, D. C. The course is roughly equivalent to a freshman English course. She had 12 students in her class (11 men and 1 woman), majors in English and computer science. The students wrote in their journals for the first 20 minutes of each class period, five days a week. At first, Christine was afraid that the students would think the journals were too babyish for a course entitled, "Composition and Research Methods." But she soon found that the journals were valuable *to her* because, "They made a technical research and composition course (not my favorite) *fun* to teach. I enjoyed the course. I had the satisfaction of doing something for my students as *persons*, not just as academic 'objects'."

The response from the students was also very positive. One of the students, Minh Luc from Vietnam, feels that the journals provide a bridge, connecting the lives of the students and their professor: "I really appreciate the idea of writing a journal in class. It not only helps me in grammar, in writing, it helps me solving problems such as studying, making friends, and so on. I am sure that I am improving very much because of the help of the journal. Additionally, the journal is a bridge which connects students' problems, lives to their professor. Toward (through) the journal, professor can understand students easily."

"It gives us the confidence of writing"

Nina Turitz teaches at the Maryland English Institute, University of Maryland (College Park). She has eight students for two hours per day. They write for the first ten minutes of each class. When asked whether they found the journals useful and/or enjoyable, her students had a variety of responses and comments. Several students felt that their writing was helped by the daily practice of writing in the journal. One student from Egypt commented that a journal "gives us the opportunity to write without any problem also it gives us the confidence of writing," while an Indian student said, "Specially I am getting to know new words and important thing I am knowing idea according to your writting response. How you write a sentence and your sentence structure." A Guatemalan added that in addition to helping him to write better, "that help to talk too, because we write that we are thinking at the moment, is like you were talking."

Several students mentioned benefits which go beyond the purely linguistic. A woman from Venezuela said that for foreign students, "this kind of communication is essential in order to know a lot of things. In some cases this type of dialog could be the unique communication of the foreign student with an american person an is especially useful." A Chinese woman commented, "I like this kind of activity because from here I can practice English dialog with my teacher. I tell her my troubles in my life as well as in my study, and my teacher could help me a lot. I can know how to live and how to study well. And my teacher can give me some good idea that I haven't." But, she feels, "when I do this activity the teacher is very important. She should be very kind and patient....Because she'll spend a lot of time to do this activity with us."

(continued from page 5)

Only one student in the class, a young man from Taiwan, did not find the journal helpful. He explained, "I don't know what I am writing. I tried to find a subject to write before I went to class every day, but I fail. I have a suggestion that is we can do it as a diary at home. If this is possible, I will do it better." Nina comments: "A nice advantage to the journal is that a request such as this can be easily fulfilled. This particular student now writes in his journal at home and brings it to me a few minutes before class starts. I have less difficulty than he in writing a quick response, and our new system seems to be working out satisfactorily."

> "The journals get me through all kinds of tense situations"

Joy Kreeft taught a 15-week business English course for ESL students with the Arlington County Adult Education Program. Two hours of each day were spent learning business vocabulary, simulating business situations and doing business writing. One hour was devoted to grammar study. The students wrote in dialogue journals for 20 minutes, three days a week, before one of the two breaks (so they could take more time if they needed it). This was a joyous time during which the students read and wrote eagerly, often breaking the silence with laughter about something Joy had written, or something they were writing back. Joy relates: "The grammar part of the course tends to be a high-tension experience for these adult students because 'grammar' is in effect a standard. So 'learning' in this hour becomes an effort to measure up to this high standard - to measure up to me, to what they think I want them to achieve. I wanted to do the journals so the students would have an experience of doing their own learning, of being able to start where they are and talk to me. The journals get me through all kinds of tense situations. On one day we had a grammar test which, judging from their behavior and looks afterwards, was devastating. I could tell that they didn't feel very good at all. After they turned in their tests, they immediately went to their journals and the atmosphere in the classroom changed. As they began to read and write, their faces and posture relaxed, and they laughed and wrote freely. It was as if they were getting their bearings again and remembering that we had things to say to each other and we were capable of saying them."

Joy also found that as the students wrote, they told about their previous experiences in business and asked questions about business options for the future. As a result, she was able to do some 'career counseling' in the journals and structure her course to suit the students' individual backgrounds and meet particular needs. The following are some examples of background information, questions, and requests that provided valuable input as she structured her course.

Student 1: *Ms. Kreeft, I realy want to join the computer class... did you think its good for me?... I just want to know the computer because that was so popular now and Im sure all of the companies will use that machine too in the near future. Maybe if you know some University about computers systems, let me now please.*

Student 2: *What do you think about my situation. I like to study Business but I think it is better to study other degree in this country. I like International marketing and I have experience in computers. I don't know what will I study here. What do you say?*

Student 3: *There is a school is near to my home and in that school I can receive or take "Data process" and English classes. Well, I will be taking.*

Student 4: *My first job was in a Water company where worked during three years, in that job got a lot of experience in use all kind the machines, electric typewriter, calculator, I.B.M. programming...then later I got a good position as PResident's secretary in one of more famous company in my city... where my duties were typing, preparing agenda, preparing all the appointment of the Presdient, dictation in shorthand, telephone call.*

"A chance to share feelings, knowledge and talents"

Linda Mazer used dialogue journals in a nine-week ESL program at Marymount College in Arlington, Virginia, in connection with reading classes at advanced, beginning and intermediate levels. She had 12 students, who wrote for the first 15 to 20 minutes of class five days a week. The journal writing not only allowed her to personalize her teaching, but provided her students with the opportunity to express themselves freely about topics of their own choosing with positive feedback from Linda and gave them a chance to share feelings, knowledge, and talents they may not otherwise have shared. One student commented, "...you can talk to your teacher about a lot of things that may be you can't do it in class or after it." It also gave students a chance to experiment with English structures that they might not otherwise have dared to use. The two examples that follow give powerful evidence of the freedom and creativity that some students experience when writing in dialogue journals:

Student 1: *Sometimes I think it is not easy to be a daughter and also be by yourself. I want to do what ever my father think is good for me, but sometimes it is not the things I would like to do. By the way he thinks that Business Administration is a good career for the future, but I think that I was not born for mathematic. I always dream to be a good painter, drawing beautifuls imagines about the earth or faces. I could not even think to be all day long sitting on a chair in front of a desk having problems to resolve. By this moment, I would like to live in another city, I do not want to go back to Honduras. I really do not like that country. I feel terrible and oppressive. For my future, I always been thinking to live in a prairie, with the ocean near my house, beautifull trees around my house and natural air. I want to be free and be myself.*

Teacher: *Spielberg's next great success was "Close Encounters of the Third Kind". Did you see that? I thought it was fun, but rather silly. After this movie many people reported having cosmic, other world experiences. I guess it's remotely possible, but I'm very skeptical. What do you think about UFO's (unidentified flying objects). Have you ever seen one? Do you know anyone who has seen one? Do people in Honduras believe in them as much as Americans seem to?*

Student: *In my country there was something strange that I think nobody is going to forget. It happened two years ago. All the lights of the city went off. And for a moment something red crossed the sky from east to west. And half an hour it happened in the capital and then in a little town called Pinalejo. The t.v. went off and the radios went crazy. I didn't see the red thing. I only remember a noise. It was like the sound of a violin. The dogs of the house barked and the birds were restless. Some people of my country believe in these things called UFOs but some of them don't. I believe in it. I think there are other people like us in other galaxies. Maybe more advanced than we are, right now.*

"Students as teachers"

Shelley Cutstein, who now teaches ESL at George Washington University, first used dialogue journals in 1981 with her low intermediate class of Japanese students learning English in a summer program at the University of Tennessee at Martin. Her students studied grammar with her for two hours daily for ten weeks. They wrote for 15-20 minutes at the beginning of each class. Shelley found that the journals provide a forum for the exchange of cultural information, and, as such, allow the student to temporarily assume the role of 'teacher.' "In the journals, I could begin to understand their culture and social values. They had the opportunity to teach me important concepts in their language through explanations in the journal. This cultural information is vital to social communication." An example of the kind of information exchange that occurred in the journals comes from the journal of Akihiro:

Teacher: *I understand very well your feeling about your parents. When I went to Spain I felt the same way...I was older than you are (I was 23) but my experience was the* same as yours Wakarimashitaka?

Student *By the way ((TOKORODE)) Why did you know Japanese words? (WAKARIMASHITAKA?) When I read this journal, I was surprised..... Do you think that you want to know more Japanese? Then I'm Japanese teacher?????...............*

Teacher: *Yes, I'd LOVE to know more Japanese. Will you be my Japanese teacher? Maybe you can teach me during my office hours or at another time. TOKORODE I think you will be a fine teacher. I hope I'm as good a student as you are. Oh, the reason I know Japanese words is because I like Japanese people (especially my students!) and I want to learn about Japan.*

Student: *I said a slip of the tongue yesterday.........You wrote on brackboard, "As hungry as 3B students."* Then Everybody in class said. "Shi-tsu-reina" (Japanese) You said "What?", "What?" I wanted to teach you what everybody said. And I saw my dictionary. Then I feeled uneasy. "I'm sorry."......... (SHI-TSU-REINA = impolite) Japanese students' words in fasion. We use to make a joke. please permit!*

Teacher: *I am learning a great deal about Japanese culture--by making mistakes! In America the sentence about being hungry is funny, but not impolite. I was surprised that the class reacted then, and when we talked about age today. But I was not angry.*

*A sentence like this would not be used as an example in a classroom in Japan. To refer to acquaintances in a way that can be interpreted as negative is impolite.

"Some questions from a teacher"

Richard Vann used dialogue journals with a low intermediate ESL class at George Washington University. His 12 students wrote for 15 minutes a day. During his presentation, Richard raised some important questions about the use of the journals. All of us, at some time or another, must answer these questions for ourselves:

- How much time should students be given to write? Should journal writing be done every day? Should it be done during class time or on individual time? (Richard found that his students had trouble expressing themselves within the 15 minute time limit that he had set.)
- Should students be allowed or encouraged to take their journals home to write? (He found that if his students took their journals home, they forget them the next day.)
- What should be done if a student doesn't feel motivated to write or simply cannot think of anything to write?

- What if you, the teacher, don't feel motivated to write?
- What if the student wants his/her writing to be graded?
- How can you respond to the 'good performance syndrome' of some students--such a fear of writing something that is not 'perfect' that it becomes impossible to write anything at all?
- How can you respond to the 'composition syndrome'—when the student feels that all writing' must take the form of a school essay about such topics as 'Transportation in my country,' and so writes one such essay in the journal each day?
- Does writing in a dialogue journal increase a teacher's workload to an unmanageable or undesirable extent?

Perhaps some of you have some good answers! These are the kinds of questions teachers often raise when they first begin.

BENEFITS IN DIVERSE SETTINGS

The third panel consisted of instructors using dialogue journals in diverse settings - prison education, graduate research seminars, teacher training, and foreign language classes. Here are their insights:

"Understanding the real nature of writing as a dialogue"

Ceil Lucas, who has used the journals in composition classes she teaches at Lorton Prison (see Newsletter #1), found that the dialogue helped her with her students' (ages 20-50) bad attitudes about writing. "They saw writing as a dry, formal process. The dialogue journals helped them understand the real nature of writing as a dialogue between writer and reader. It also helped them work out how to handle their time to plan goals for using their time in prison creatively, and it allowed me - an outsider and a woman - to help them think through those plans."

Ceil found that they discuss life issues that they had no time to talk about in class, or that they would never have brought up in face-to-face communication. She said the greatest benefit to her was the "excitement" of reading their entries. "I found I was so anxious to know what they said that I'd try to read them while driving back from Lorton to D.C.! And the journals gave me instances that fit exactly the content of my class - style differences, voice, addressing an audience - so I could explain and reinforce in the journals the concepts taught in class, answering their questions by pointing out instances in their own entries. I could show them that they also had a 'style' unique to them."

The following is a typical example of the kind of conversation Ceil had with her students. 'Joe' is in his forties, and has been in and out of prison for a good part of his adult life.

Ceil. *Why do you write poetry?*

Joe: *I enjoy saying things in a way that possibly noone else has said them. The rhythms of words in conjunction with my thoughts and then set to paper turns me on.*

The ~~thought~~ idea that only a person who is in tune with my thoughts will be enjoying my words turns me on.

I enjoy--words and phrases with implicit meanings.

Ceil: *As I was driving home last week and again when I read this, I thought to myself "How can someone who writes poetry, and good, interesting poetry to boot, say that he doesn't understand the style sheet?" If you can talk about "the rhythm of words in conjunction with my thoughts," then you must be able to see it in other people's writing, no? To see the choices that they have made---isn't it the same choice process that you use when you write?*

Do you write poetry at particular times? Why do you write when? Who are you talking to?

Joe: *The only resemblance in my writing to that of other writers is that we use words. Trained writers have a method in their work--whereas, I only have a knowledge of word usage and write purely from instinct of what should go where. I can recognize that my work sometimes lacks continuity because I write as I think which at times is incoherent....*

Ceil: *Well, I'm gonna keep on arguing! I believe that if you ask any trained writer, he would say that writing is, as you say, a knowledge of word usage and instinct, and he would say that writing is thinking. Is there something wrong with saying to yourself and others, "Hey, I can write?"...*

"A chance to ask (and answer) practical questions"

Jessie Roderick, University of Maryland School of Education, began using dialogue journals in a course for teachers in Language Arts which met twice a week. She found that they were immediately helpful in supporting the course emphasis on individualized instruction. She found her students were actually doing in the dialogue journals the types of writing they were studying, trying out different types of writing. Because of the intensive twice-a-week meetings, the dialogue journals also gave students a chance to ask Jessie practical questions about how to apply the theories and concepts stressed in class; this aspect helped her individualize the instruction to meet their needs. She suggested their journal writing focus on "Language Arts and Learning," and many of the students used this theme to reflect on their own teaching in relation to broader experiences.

"Coping with real diversity"

Bill Stokoe, Linguistics Research Laboratory, Gallaudet College, found the benefits to him were in communicating with students in a research seminar in Sign Language: some deaf, some normal hearing, one from a foreign country and one visually handicapped. The individual dialogues gave him feedback from each student about course content and an opportunity to explain what the student might not have been able to understand in class.

"Expanding my students' use of written Portuguese"

Jose Goncalves, Sociolinguistics Program, Georgetown University, teaches Portuguese to American students. He found that "dialogue journals in a foreign language situation helped me expand my students' use of written Portuguese beyond the literacy topics presented in their texts to everyday life situations. It also helped me to correct easily their use of false cognates from English and Spanish, a particular problem in mastering Portuguese, by being able to write back and model the correct Portuguese word or phrase.

"Making connections between each person and the discipline"

Roger Shuy, Sociolinguistics Program, Georgetown University, used the journals as an integral part of a graduate course in a sociolinguistics fieldwork class, having students write their observations and relfections about each linguistic fieldwork assignment. He said, "What I've learned from doing the dialogue journals was that I had a lot of goals for this class, beyond the learning of methods, some of which I hadn't made explicit to students, some of which I'm not too sure I knew, until I found myself writing them out as a response to a question. The 'greatest' benefit to me was that in rereading the journals for this presentation, I found that it taught me what my real goals for the field methods course were -- which weren't the ones listed in the course outline. The dialogue journals extended my teaching beyond the ostensible topic ("field methods"), and even beyond the discipline (linguistics) into life topics. We ended up discussing how to make connections between each person's life (including mine) and the topics and discipline we were in.

FOREIGN CORRESPONDENT'S CORNER

We have a few overseas correspondents - in South Africa, Australia, South and Central America. Herbert Nilsen is one, now teaching in Colombia. Here's his report, filed August 30, 1982.

"A little less than a year ago, I was most interested to read in the October 1981 issue of THE LINGUISTIC REPORTER, your article "Literacy as an Interactive Process." I have been using the system of dialogue journals with students here in a course called English Workshop. I have found enthusiastic participation. That is, to say students are more willing to write, and seem most pleased by the personal attention. I can understand this, since as you well know, compositions usually get a grade, or at most an in-class reading, never a carefully considered complete response from a thinking human being and an invitation to keep corresponding. It is still too early to be sure of overall results, I feel, but the fact of writing more, of writing for real communicative reasons, not just as a classroom procedure, of reading and evaluating that reading for a written response—all of this is genuine communicative activity and I can't see how it can fail to build not only writing skills, but all of the other skills as well by developing the cognitive processes basic to language for any purpose, at any level, and in any of its manifestations."

SPOTLIGHTS: Publications -- Conferences and Workshops

A number of us are involved in giving workshops, conference papers and in publishing our experiences. If you'll let us know about your activities, we'll include them in this space.

Future Conferences and Workshops

October 1 and 2, 1982 -
"Experiencing 'Real' English:
Writing a Dialogue Journal"
Shelby Gutstein, Joy Kreeft, Christine
Meloni, and Carol Harnatz, Washington
Area TESOL Workshop.

November 19, 1982 -
"'You Can Look It Up in Your Mind':
Findings from Classroom Research on
Dialogue Journal Writing."
Jana Staton, Research Paper at the
National Council of Teachers of
English, Washington, D. C.

May 1983 -
"Learning Literacy through Dialogue
Journals."
Leslee Reed, Jana Staton, Joy Kreeft,
Quinda Strube, Selma Horowitz, Sara
Sill, Ramona Ramirez Gray, Mary Ann
Pusey, Symposium, International
Reading Association, Anaheim, Calif.

Publications

"Thinking Together: The Role of Language Interaction in Developing Children's Thinking" - Jana Staton, to appear as a handbook in the Talking and Writing Series, Basic Skills Improvement Program, U. S. Dept. of Education (Dec. 1982).

"Dialogue Journals: Learning Opportunity for Students and Their Teachers" - ** Margaret Crocker, Halifax, Nova Scotia, submitted to Highway One, Journal of the Canadian Council of Teachers of English.

"Written Language Growth in Young Children: What We Are Learning from Research" - Marcia Farr, to appear as a handbook in the Talking and Writing Series, Basic Skills Improvement Program, U. S. Dept. of Education (Dec. 1982).

(**No word yet from Highway One but the article will appear in Dalhousie Univ. Monographs, J.S.)

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20007

Dialogue

THE NEWSLETTER ABOUT DIALOGUE JOURNALS

April, 1983
Editor: Jana Staton

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF DIALOGUE JOURNALS

We promised that this issue would present the benefits--and drawbacks--of engaging in dialogue journals from the students' point of view, to accompany the "Benefits to the Teacher" in our second issue. We believe strongly that the student's understanding of this experience is a crucial validation of its value, and that we must pay close attention to what they say about it. Here is a sampling, from 2nd grade, 6th grade, high school, and college/adult levels.

"You only look up in your mind"

These excerpts are from interviews with Leslee Reed's students, 6th grade, in 1981. All are learning English as a second language.

Claudia: "I would ask her what a word like 'chemistry' means. I didn't know, and in the dictionary I looked for it, but didn't really understand it. And she explained it to me[in the journal]. There are some questions you don't understand and you have to look it up in the dictionary. If you don't understand the dictionary, you use the journal. It's a kind of dictionary."

* * * * *

Martin: "If I have a question, and I feel embarrassed to ask her personally, I could write her in the journal. It's easier. You don't have to tell her personally, you can just write it, and she'll asnwer it back. Before I didn't write that much about myself, but now I do."

* * * * *

Benny: "I just hate the journal. I don't like writing in it. At the starting of the year, I didn't mind so much, but now I do."

Int: "What do you think made the difference?"

Benny: "I'm bored. I don't want to write in my journal. Now our work is getting hard and I try to get home so I just leave my journal. When she gets mad at me for something I don't do, that's when I write in my journal, 'I hate you!'"

Int: "Then what happens?"

"You only look up-- cont.

Benny: "She writes, 'you may hate me but I don't hate you.... I'm going to keep my journal... I'm going to burn it!"

* * * * *

Letitia: "It helped me to learn English better, because I say something that doesn't make sense, and sometimes she writes me the same but with different words and I understand and so next time I put it right."

* * * * *

Int:"Do you write just three sentences?"

Claudia: No-ooo!"

Int: " Why not? You don't have to."

Claudia: "When you write just three sentences, it seems like you don't explain anything, and you don't have anything fun to read. It doesn't fit. Most of the time she writes the same as I write.

Int: "Why does she write more when you write more?"

Claudia: "Because I tell her more subjects, more things to talk about. "

* * * * *

Nicole: "Reports is-- you have to look up facts and everything, but journal is what you only look up in your mind and you write whatever you want. "

* * * * *

Jenny: "When we are writing in journals, she doesn't act like a teacher. She doesn't insist on her thing...she just answers my questions and tells me what she thinks. But she doesn't say you shouldn't think like that, like some people."

IN THIS ISSUE:

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"I found incredible things" - Graduate ESL students

Nina Turitz, an instructor at the Maryland English Institute, asked the thirteen graduate students in her intensive English class to give her their evaluations of the dialogue journals, which they had kept with her for a semester (at first writing every day in class, and gradually at home on their own time). She writes:

Eight students felt the activity had a positive effect on their writing: "Writing on different aspects and in different fields helped me to express myself. The more I write, the more I improve my way of writing." - from an Egyptian student. Four students expressed the desire that their journals be corrected for their grammatical errors. (In my rather limited experience -- two semesters -- with dialogue journals, there are always a few who feel this way.

Students commented that they appreciated the journals because they enabled them to communicate in writing what they found too difficult to express orally. A student from Shanghai said:

"At the beginning most foreigner cannot speak very fluently. They are afraid to make mistakes when they speak. So they can use journals to explain."

Perhaps the most touching and perceptive comments came from a Korean man studying counseling:

> "At first, I confused to write journals, because I did not have enough ability to write English and I don't want to open my mind to other people, include my teacher. So, sometimes I hesitated to write journals and sometimes I upset from the journals.
>
> One month later, I found incredible things. That was my journals. A lot of pages were covered by dialogues with my teacher, and very, very important things and content--even psychological problems--have discussed.... Some days my teacher encouraged about English study. Some days she gave me good suggestions. At last, I found the hidden meaning of the dialogue journals."

"To tell almost everything I have kept deep inside"

Christine Meloni, who teaches ESL at George Washington University, shares this final entry from an Iraqi student:

> "I really don't want to finish talking with you on these silent papers, but I hope these white papers tell you about what I have carried as much thoughtful as I have carried to myself. I can't imagine how I was enjoying writing in this small notebook and how much I was waiting to know your opinion, your beautiful answers, and your wonderful feelings.
>
> I don't want to end writing to you, because I loved this writing; so I have loved the person who let me express myself in the class environment and outside it, and let me avoid being shy to tell almost everything that I have kept deep inside myself."

"I always flip the pages, wanting to read your opinions"

At Gallaudet College in Washington, D.C., deaf students are keeping dialogue journals with their instructors in several English Language program classes. Most deaf students are learning written English as a second language, and many dislike writing tasks in a language which they have never used for functional conversation. Here is one student's perspective on his first encounter with meaningful interactive writing:

> "Writing journal is a great idea and I really enjoy doing it. I love the journal because it has a lot of writing and communications or feedbacks. When I come into here, I always flip the pages, wanting to read your opinions or stories. I always think about many things or beautiful pictures in my mind, and I frequently feel like to write about those things but I never did. But I do now after I notice how much I enjoy the journal. ...I really enjoy writing and get feedback from you as we're a lot the same and I'm glad to know that we are similar to each other!"

"You are less feeling afraid"

Joy Kreeft's adult ESL students interviewed each other about their reactions to the dialogue journal experience.

"You know the first time that I wrote in my journal I was very afraid of writing. And now I can write easily. I'm not afraid to write. It's very easy for me writing. Also, when I write a letter, it's easy for my because I'm not afraid of writing now. After you write in a journal for 3 1/2 months you are able to try everything. You are less feeling afraid and then you are able to write in any journal or any paper that you have to write."- Carmen

"I can review new words. When I am writing, I sometimes check a dictionary and then ask her what a word means. Sometimes she gives me the correct answer and sometimes she is confused."- Jaime

"I always ask everything, anything that I want. I cannot stop asking. I use the journal to ask everything that I don't know. As long as I get this opportunity, I will not stop asking things in the journal. We can learn a lot by asking."- Widi

* * INT'L READING ASSOCIATION * * *
ANNUAL CONVENTION, MAY 4

Learning Literacy through Dialogue Journals" a symposium on dialogue journal use focusing on reading/writing acquisition across levels.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 4, 2-4:45, Convention Center California B

Stop by even if you can't attend, to say hello.

"It is GGG-rate. I like it"

Deborah Jaffer, a reading specialist in Philadelphia and a doctoral candidate at the Univ. of Pennsylvania, began using dialogue journals with a group of second graders last year, as a regular part of their daily reading class with her. At the end of the year, as good ethnographer, she documented the participant reactions to this new experience. Here are the written reactions of 7 and 8 year olds to dialogue journals:

"It is GGG-rate. I like it. I don't know why but it is fun. I Love it. It is the Best in the world. Theires millions of things to say I will tell you 1 of them. Because it's just like eating candy bar. Becase it is fun. It is even funner than eating a candy bar." (from a 7 year old girl who is extremely shy in oral interaction.)

"Meanwhile I love this kind of writing. If you want to know why then I'll tell you. If I want to write to you, then I don't know what the teacher is thinking to say to me. Maybe she will say something good. And mabe she will put a mark I've never herd of, or maybe a mark I cannot under stand well anyway: It is Best to write Back to you...GoodBye! I've wish I could stay. (an 8 year old boy who stated that he hates writing.)

"It was kind of neat and fun and different. And it some time funny. And I sometime don't like it. I can't think of anything." (8 year old girl)

"It was fun here. Because I feel like I was writing a real letter. It was like I'm a letter writer." (7 year old bilingual boy from the Phillipines.)

* * * WORKSHOP REQUEST * * *

Peggy Roberts, of Ashby, Mass.(north of Boston) has written to us asking if anyone in Massachusetts or nearby states using dialogue journals would be available to speak to teachers in Ashby, or give a workshop on their use.(We guess she means at elementary level). Peggy's address is
37 Jewell Road, Ashby, Mass.
We don't know of anyone in the Boston area, but if any of you do, please pass on this notice and Peggy's address.

NEW APPLICATIONS

When we started, our focus was on the use of dialogue journal communication in a self-contained classroom with 'average' students. But many of the 300 or so people who are on our mailing list are at other levels, so we keep learning about new applications. Here are some wonderful ones.

Dialogues with Learning Disabled Students

Roberta Steinberg

Roberta Steinberg, usually known as Keeny, has begun dialogue journals this year with her learning disabled students, who have a variety of problems: emotional, perceptual, auditory processing, mild autism. Keeny's school, Oakwood School in Fairfax County, follows a county Language Arts curriculum which requires students to keep personal journals.

Keeny found, however, that the students wrote 'junk' in their journals. It was just an assignment that they fulfilled as quickly as possible, without thinking at all about the quality of their writing. So this year she began writing and found that the students now feel more accountable for what they write; it must be legible and comprehensible, because they must write for an audience, her. She has noticed a big difference in their dialogue journals this year from those of last year, when she did not write back.

The students write 2 or 3 times a week. They are given time in class (5-15 mins.) and told how many sentences to write (for example, she will tell them to write 3, 4, or 5 sentences that day). Keeny feels that they need that much structure to guide them. If they wrote every day, they wouldn't have anything to say.

Whether there are signs of language improvement or not, the writing is a good outlet for these students' feelings. The students are so eager to read her responses, even though they do not write every day, that they take their journals from her desk to see what she has written, and they sometimes check every day to see if she has written something.

The students write about things they would never talk about in class. One student wrote:

"Sometimes I limp when I walk. I like it at school because no one notices. At home they notice and tease me."

Keeny would have had no idea that Elizabeth felt this way without the journal dialogue.

"Why You Call me Emigrant?"

(excerpts from a forthcoming article in Childhood Education on dialogue journals, by Fran Davis, Coordinator, New Jersey MAP-S project)

As part of a migrant education project funded by the U.S. Office of Education Program, Title I ESEA, we began the use of dialogue-journal writing as a technique for counselor use with students. The project, New Jersey Project MAP-S, was concerned with developing a model for aiding migrant junior and senior high school youth obtain career and occupational information and self-understanding of career goals. The goals of the journal writing were that students would develop greater fluency through writing and reveal through their writings their levels of occupational and career concept understanding.

Our belief was that writing is a process which undergirds and extends the writer's conceptual understanding. Further, that writing developing from the individual's oral language experience first utilizes the expressive mode. The writings in which our migrant students first engaged was personal and expressive in nature. These students then moved, at their own direction, to more referential and sometimes poetic writings. These often involved understandings or misconceptions about migrant status and the occupational world. The writing frequently requested information or clarification of ideas and indicated the attitudes or desires of the students.

Emigrant, cont.

Excerpts from some of their journals illustrate these aspects as well as the mingling of personal and referential writing.

Clarification Request:

S: Why they call is program Education for Emigrant? I believe that this program should have a different name because none of us are emigrant. We have the same rights and priblich the American people have.

Teacher response:

I agree. I also believe this program should be named differently. Migrants do have the same rights and privileges as other American people. However, we found the money for this program under migrant education funding and that is the reason for the name "Migrant". At one time or another most parents of the students in the program migrated from Puerto Rico or some other place to New Jersey to work...

Attitude:

S: I have a job at the auction and we just got new girls working there. I've been working there for almost three years and I feel like I have to compete with the others. I like the type of work I'm doing which is a sales person but, I don't know how to solve my problem. do you think I'm getting bored with the job or I just don't want to compete....The kind of work I see myself doing, well working with people is a very broad subject and it doesn't matter the type of work as long as its helping someone...
It takes me time to write a poem...

Poem

Why is it so hard to be me?
Why do I pretend to be all
The things I see
Why can't I be Free
and let everything inside
come out. is it
Because I'm afraid
I won't be liked for
who I am. is because
they still won't see
me as me. Please
Tell me why I can't
Be me.

Teacher Response:

In solving your problems, you need to begin to take them apart and look at each piece. Are the girls already friends before they came to work? Are the girls excluding you? Do they look down on you?

I know you like to work with people, that in itself will make you less competitive and more caring. But if you get paid to sell, you must sell. Why don't you try talking to them. If you are really bored, maybe you can ask your boss to change your type of work for awhile.

Acually your poem answers your preoccupation about your co-workers and how you feel. It is natural to feel the way you feel now. Just keep on looking and explaining, writing and reading what others write to compare and you'll do alright. The more you understand and like yourself, the less scared you'll be of others disliking you.

Parent -Student-Teacher Dialogues

In the Huntington Public Schools of Long Island, a 4th grade teacher, Cleo Kohm, has created a version of the dialogue journal which involves parents as well as students. Its purpose is to encourage a three-way dialogue, and for Cleo and her students, it really seems to work (although with older students and some younger ones, involving parents in this way would probably prevent many students from complaining and being very open).

From the notes that Carol Hittleman (the curriculum specialist at Huntington Schools) shared with us, we gather that students may keep a personal journal all week, but on Friday morning, they write a letter in their journal to their parents recapping the events of the week. During the school day, Cleo reads the letters and responds to the students' communications. She returns the journals to the students before they go home on Friday. The students take their journal books home to share with their parents.

The parents read the student's

communication as well as the teacher's communication, and then write their responses.

COMMENTS FROM STUDENTS:

"I enjoy writing about the things that went on in school. It tells our parents what we do in or out of school. For me it seems like a diary because it feels private."

"I think the green book idea is great. I like writing to my parents and before I take it home Mrs. Kohm writes in it. I like to hear what Mrs. Kohm thinks of my letter. I think the green book is great."

COMMENTS FROM PARENTS:

"We are continually surprised at Kristin's weekly comments. She looks forward to both reading and writing in the book. I'm sure she is trying to inform us of her feelings as well as her activities--and that's so wonderful! We only wish her sisters and brother could have had the benefit of a "green book" experience."

* * *DIALOGUE JOURNAL HANDBOOK * * *

Our handbook on using dialogue journals, promised to be out in January, is in its final draft stage. We think the handbook will be available in some form by fall, but that's a little late for those of you who ordered it already! Most of the delay is due to the authors' slowness at putting it together long distance. All of you on the newsletter mailing list (paid up or not!) will receive notice of its actual publication--we hope you'll be patient.

Leslee's Corner

I just made a presentation to the Rowland School District (part of my work for the UCLA Writing Project). I spoke there last year and had some repeat listeners this year. One had to share an entry in her dialogue journals with our group:

> "Today I had some problems. I was really pest off!"

Having a repeat audience in part was interesting because there were many more questions, most of them like those we are working on for the handbook. I have sent them a copy of our draft and asked them to see if those answers are helpful.

From the LA Times column of Art Seidenbaum, worth sharing for his affirmation of all of us as teachers, (Feb. 27, 1983)

"Just when language looked to be more imperiled than the California Condor, when public education seemed as much a social slippage as skid row...along comes the Eighth Annual Practicum on Teaching Composition, sponsored by the English Council of LA. I saw teachers teaching each other with more mutual respect, glee, fervor than seemed possible in this season of skinflint semesters. Maybe I saw a skewed sample, the magical minority, but there are literate, impassioned people in the classrooms and they remain optimistic, making even me optimistic that the last word is how the word lasts... Leslee Reed of Alexandria Street Elementary School led a session on dialogue journals...what counts is the quality of communication, on paper in privacy... The student has a pen pal as well as a pedagogue, and both have a chance to reason before reacting."

Reader Questions

from Margaret Lewis, Colorado Springs

Q: I would like to know the size of Mrs. R's class(es). Are the comments given here [in the Linguistic Reporter article, Oct. 1981] typical of the length of her daily responses to each student?

Not all students want "a significant, interactive, dynamic relationship with a teacher." What do you suggest doing with them?

A: Mrs. Reed's classes average about 28 students, in a self-contained setting. The brief comments we've often quoted are usually excerpts from a complete daily exchange, which can vary (for 6th graders) from three-sentence exchanges, to rather lengthy multi-page entries. Our rule of thumb is to try to write "about as much" as the student does, but generally teachers tend to focus on the more important topics, and probably don't write quite as much as most students.

Each student has the choice to keep the dialogue on a "safe" level, and for some students, a significant interactive relationship with the teacher never develops. Margaret Crocker, from Halifax, Nova Scotia, in a recent article gave a good answer to this problem, and we quote her:

> "But not all students respond enthusiastically, fluently or even in an interesting way to dialogue journals. Often students feel reserved about expressing their personal feelings and merely write dry accounts of recent past events. This is the student's perogative and although the teacher may encourage extension or personal interaction with skillful responses, some students maintain their distance. This can be from a mistrust of teachers or simply because the student does not feel comfortable writing expressively after years of not having the opportunity to do so. For the teacher, such writing may be boring over a long period of time but it makes it all the more important to support the student's writing in a positive manner."

REVIEW OF CURRENT RESEARCH: NEXT ISSUE

Next issue, we plan to review briefly research currently underway or being planned, focusing on dialogue journals. This particularly includes doctoral dissertations, (after all, that's how the original NIE study began, as Jana Staton's dissertation in counseling psychology).

We already have information on the following studies:

A Study of Audience Awareness in Dialogue Journals of Second-Grade Students
Deborah Jaffer,
University of Penn

Dialogue Journal Use in a Required Technical Writing Course for College Juniors (this has a control group design)
Marsha Markman
University of Maryland

Methods of Assessing Reading Development in Dialogue Journals of Deaf Writers
Jana Staton, Bill Stokoe,
Roger Shuy
Gallaudet College

Acquisition of Literacy in a Second Language: Use of Dialogue Journals in Beginning Spanish
Curtis Hayes
University of Texas,
San Antonio

We know there are more research efforts going on out there: if you'll send us a 200-word description of what you're doing, or would like to do, we'll include it. The next issue is likely to emerge about July, so why not send something off now? Be sure to include how others may write or call you for more information.

Volume I, No. 4

Center for Applied
Linguistics
3520 Prospect St.,N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20007

Dialogue

THE NEWSLETTER ABOUT DIALOGUE JOURNALS

August, 1983

Editors: Jana Staton
Joy Kreeft
Shelley Gutstein

Research Issues: Elusive Definitions

-Shelley Gutstein

In conducting research, one of the first things we do is define our terms such that we can ask pertinent research questions about the subject of our study. Sometimes this is the most difficult task we face as researchers, since often we want to ask questions about concepts which defy precise definition. Fluency is an example of such an elusive concept. We have intuitive notions--something like a prototype--of what fluency means in language learning. We know that we want our students to develop in both spoken and written fluency. But when asked what will help them achieve this, we don't know. Many of us feel that dialogue journals facilitate fluency, but because our definition of fluency is not clear, we cannot show how it happens.

Fillmore (1979) offers a definition of oral fluency which may well transfer to the written medium. According to Fillmore (p. 93), a speaker is fluent in a language if he is able to 1) fill time with talk, 2) talk in coherent, reasoned sentences, 3) have appropriate things to say in a wide range of contexts, and 4) be creative and imaginative in language use. A fluent speaker, therefore, possesses all four of these characteristics.

Since dialogue journal writing exhibits many of the same characteristics as oral language, parallel criteria to those Fillmore suggests for speech might provide clues to the development of fluency in dialogue journal writing. A definition of fluency in this context might be as follows.

First, a fluent writer is one who can write at length with few pauses. This is not to be confused with quantity of writing, since fluent writers can convey their ideas in relatively few sentences. A fluent writer, then, writes easily and quickly. Second, a fluent writer writes in coherent, reasoned sentences. These sentences reflect grammatical accuracy, but more importantly, the semantic and syntactic relationships between the sentences are clear. The writing has meaning. Third, a fluent writer uses language appropriately in a wide range of contexts. This means that the writer knows how to use language purposively in different situations: to inform, evaluate, apologize, offer opinions thank, etc. Studies of this functional nature of dialogue journal writing (Shuy, 1982; Gutstein, 1983ms) have suggested the relationship between functional language use and fluency, however the results are not conclusive. Last, the fluent writer is creative and imaginative in language use.

It might seem that young writers or writers in a second language might not possess the attributes Fillmore outlines. However, there is evidence to suggest that in dialogue journal writing students have many of these attributes, and are acquiring more. Clearly, fluency is not a decontextualized concept. Rather, it is influenced by context and is a dynamic attribute that is achieved as a result of a process of thinking and reasoning.

The lines above represent a first attempt at establishing several criteria for a prototypical definition for written fluency, which our students' writing may more or less resemble. As such, it is surely in need of refinement. Therefore, your comments, insights and suggestions on this topic are most welcome.

Research Issues will be a part of future newsletters, and we'd like to know what other constructs you find "elusive". Please let us know, also, what other topics you would like to see discussed in this portion of DIALOGUE.

IN THIS ISSUE:

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(C. Fillmore, *Individual Differences in Language Acquisition and Language Behavior.* Academic Press, 1979.

Reports on Research

These two studies show how important interaction is for language development.

Young writers in search of an audience

Deborah Jaffer, University of Pennsylvania

James Britton (1975) states that a sense of audience, 'the ability to make adjustments and choices in writing which take account of one's audience,' is a key dimension of development in writing ability. Since adjustment to audience is inherent in all language use, children possess a sense of audience in oral interactions. This knowledge simply needs to be transferred to written communication. A communication dyad, such as the one that exists in dialogue journal writing, may provide the means for making the transfer from informal conversation to the traditional essay writing done in school.

My study examines the role of dialogue journal writing in the development of audience awareness in the writing of 6- to 8-year olds from the first and second grades in a public school in Philadelphia. Examples given here show some ways in which the students showed increasing audience awareness:

> Asking questions (Rebecca)
> Did you have a husband before I met you. plese tell me.

> Giving informative details to make meaning clear (Rebecca)
> I will explain it like this. One day the teacher was working with a reading group and the class got so noisy when they were at the book case she told the class that they couldn't go to the book case any more now do you understand?

> Showing sensitivity to audience feelings (Sandy)
> sory I don't no your parents and now I never will. I am sory that there not liveing. you are to I bet. SORY. I LOVE YOU.

> Specifying type of answer desired, to assure accurate information (Michael)
> All about me and you. My name is M.J.D. My baithday is Sept. 21 I well be 8 years old. How old are you. Chos the one. 30 34 40 45 29 6 22 26 35 21 52 49 33 if you are not one of them put a x on the one you are the closest to.

It is my belief that because of the supportive immediate feedback that dialogue journal writing provides, these students developed a sense of audience in their writing, and thus they moved from writing that resembled written down speech to more conventionalized text.

Audience, cont.

This is excerpted from Deborah's article in The Acquisition of Literacy: Ethnographic Perspectives. Bambi Schieffelin, ed. Ablex. In press. Deborah Jaffer can be contacted at The University of Pennsylvania.

Back to 'grammar'; what can it tell us?

Joy Kreeft, Georgetown University

What can the study of the acquisition of grammatical structures in ESL students' dialogue journals tell teachers? First, it provides a picture of students' grammatical competence, in the context of natural interaction. This allows teachers to identify problem areas, but also students may surprise us with abilities that would not otherwise appear on tests and class assignments. Secor we can see how the interaction itself provides the opportunity for the use and modeling of a wide variety of structures that may not otherwise be used.

I am studying the acquisition of grammatical structures of six sixth-grade students learning English as a second language, as demonstrated in their dialogue journal writing with Leslee Reed. These students, from four language backgrounds (Korean, Italian, Burmese, Vietnamese/Chinese), had been in the U.S. for less than one year when they entered her class.

Following each student's patterns of acquisition of different structures is excitin and informative. But the question that inevitably comes to mind is, does the dialogue journal writing in any way influence this development? I think that it does. First, Mrs. Reed writes in the journal, too. When a student uses a structure, her reply sometimes models that structure. For example:

> Student: Jenny through ball is she is not thought to you...
>
> Teacher: Yes! I know Jenny threw the ball at the first base...

If students are attentive to what Mrs. Reed writes, they incorporate the structures she uses in their own entries. One student, after reading her questions, that almost always began with 'did' ('Did you like our play?'), began all of his questions with 'did,' even when he should have used the present tense ('Did you think we will do art tomorrow?') until he later mastered past and present tense uses.

Continued on p. 3

Back to grammar, cont.

Second, the very act of communicating makes many language demands. This example shows one student's desire to be understood:

> Andy: I like it [Spring festival] because very, very, very and very happy. (Oh! This sentence wrong. I want to tell you "fun" but I forgot so I want change "happy to "fun.")

The more that students attempt to communicate, the more language demands are placed on them, and I am sure that they learn more language in the process.

Joy Kreeft can be reached at: The Center for Applied Linguistics, 3520 Prospect St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20007

DESIGNS FOR RESEARCH

being a discussion of new research: purposes, participants, ways of organizing it, with identification of the scholarly types behind the proposals.

Effects of Dialogue Writing in a College Composition Course

MARSHA MARKMAN is exploring the usefulness of dialogue journals in a required upper division college composition course, in which students are frequently anxious and also ill-prepared for functional writing in their professions. Her design consists of having five colleagues teaching two sections of the same course use the dialogue journals in one section only, thus providing a treatment and control group while controlling for instructor effects. The design will make it possible to attribute differences on outcome measures to the dialogue process.

Since one semester is a brief period to observe change in writing proficiency, - the analysis focuses on student attitudes toward the writing process, and the dialogue experience. A content analysis of the journal texts will study how the written communication was used to fulfill individual student needs and to meet course requirements(the teacher's needs!).

Marsha can be reached through the Dept. of English, Univ. of Maryland, College Park, Md. 20472.

Designs for Research, cont.

Acquisition of Literacy in a Second Language: Dialogue Journals in Beginning Spanish Courses.

CURTIS HAYES is examining the acquisition of Spanish as a foreign language, through the use of dialogue journals written in Spanish. Junior and senior high school Spanish classes in San Antonio, Texas provide the setting. Two aspects of this study distinguish it: 1) The language used in the journals is not the language of instruction in the school generally, nor the home language of students. As a result, most of the Spanish learning observed can probably be attributed to in-class activities and the dialogue journal writing; 2) each participating teacher has two Spanish classes, only one of which will use the dialogue journals, permitting comparisons on relevant measures.

--for more information, write Dr. Curtis Hayes, Bicultural-Bilingual Studies, University of Texas-San Antonio.

Language Functions in the Writing of Deaf College Students

JOHN ALBERTINI and BONNIE MEATH-LANG send word from NTID of their project studying the writing of young deaf adults in Englis class, in dialogue journals and more forma kinds of assigned writing. Using the writing of the same students in the two different contexts, they are comparing language functions and topic choice. Among the common language functions in the journals are suggesting, evaluating, asking about course content, expressing opinions, and requesting personal information of the instructor. A paper on this study will be given at the Fifth Conference on Curriculum Theory and Practice in Dayton, Ohio, in October.

--for more information, write them at Dept. of Communication Research, NTID, Rochester, New York 14623

Topic Analysis in University EFL Dialogue Journals

English language programs for foreign students emphasize academic needs while neglecting important personal 'life' needs. Dialogue journals enable the instructor to take both types of needs

Research Designs, cont.

simultaneously. CHRISTINE MELONI is beginning a study to analyze how concerns of foreign students can be met through the journals. Her research questions include: (1) What topics occur in entries? (2) Can these be categorized? (3)Do certain topics, or categories occur more frequently than others? (4) Can differences in topic occurrence be related to students' sex, culture, level of English proficiency, age, or marital status?

Her journals come from English language students at the George Washington Univ., and she plans a sample representative of male and female, levels of English proficiency(5), and from four geographical areas: Far East, Middle East, Latin America, and Europe.

A small sample of text will be analyzed in order to create a model with categories based on specific criteria, and the model will then be used to analyze the total sample(approximately 60 students).

— for more information, write her at Dept. of English for International Students, George Washington Univ., Washington, DC 20057

Learning to Play the Game

Human communication is something like a game --practicing all the component "skills" doesn't help you to play the game. Only playing the game for real, in actual communication where you have to make all the choices, can do that. For many profoundly deaf students entering Gallaudet College, using written English is a very unfamiliar game, for which they have practiced a lot without many opportunities for meaningful and demanding play.

The Dialogue Journal Project at Gallaudet College has been working with college and high school instructors. This summer, with student and teacher consent, we have copies of 25 full-year dialogue journals and 60 journals kept for one semester, all from English Language Program classes(a prerequisite to Freshman English.

Preliminary analysis of the journals is being conducted by CINDY PUTHOFF(an MSSD instructor), BILL STOKOE(Director, LRL), ROGER SHUY and JANA STATON. Our focus is on the journals as a means of successful communication, which each student(and teacher)plays in a unique way.

Research Issues

1. What encourages students to begin using the dialogue journals more effectively? What does finding a "hot topic" have to do with it?(Many Gally students start by writing repetitive "safe" descriptions of their weekends, and ignore the teacher responses).

2. What language and reasoning abilities unmeasured on regular tests do these students have which the dialogue journals elicit and provide opportunities for using?

3. What teacher response strategies seem to encourage more thoughtful, reflective writing?

4. What relationships occur between acquisition of more complex,mature reasoning and mastery of English grammatical usage?

Our design for the analysis begins with intensive study of the individual year-long journals, kept with the same instructor. We plan in this first 'pass' through the data to describe the variation in patterns of communication, involving such features as topics, language functions, strategies for elaboration, styles of reasoning, clarification strategies. With this understanding , we intend to look next at those journals kept for only the spring semester(as students transfer into a dialogue journal-keeping class from another section). This group of journals represents students with a delayed start, providing a kind of natural control group who have received equal instructional treatment and are matched in length of time in program, but not in journal use.(This allows use of the famous "patched-up design" of Campbell and Stanley).

If these second semester students (new to dialogue journals) have communication patterns at the beginning very unlike their peers who have done it for several months, and very like the patterns of use and change of those same peers at the beginning of the fall semester, we can make a stronger claim that the dialogue journal practice itself is responsible for the patterns of change observed.

We also plan to explore the relationship of frequency of interaction and communication patterns, since among the various instructors the frequency varied naturally from once to three times a week.

-for more information, write to Jana Staton, Linguistics Research Laboratory, Gallaudet College, Wash. D.C. 20002

Leslee's Corner

More and more, I see how important Dialogue Journals are for providing an open channel of communication and a sense of belonging for students! As my school year begins and the roster shows that my students come from several different countries and fifth grade classrooms, my first concern is to give these individuals a sense of self-confidence and a sense of community as soon as possible.

Everything is strange in this new class--the teacher, the other students, even a lot of the activities and procedures are strange and different. Students feel isolated for a while and doubt their own self-worth. It is crucial that by the end of this first day together no one feels left out or isolated and without a friend.

We begin building our friendship with each other at once. We learn first names, we explore our room, and put our possessions in place. Then carefully, slowly, we talk about what we do in this room and why. Toward the end of our first day together I introduce Dialogue Journals. I explain the 'rules,' and possible first day entries, suggested by the students, are written on the board. I tell them that if they can't think of three sentences, they can copy the sentences on the board. Then they write and each journal is placed in my bag, for me to respond to later.

I can hardly wait to get home and connect the names and the writing. Some students have copied three sentences from the board. Are they frightened? lazy? or just unsure? Others have written nearly a page. They tell me many things--they want to be my friend; they liked my explanations that day; they liked the set-up of the room; some are incredulous--'You are going to write to me every day? What if I am absent?' There are also many questions--questions whose answers are necessary for survival in this new place:

"This is a nice class. The teacher is nice. Why didn't they put me in a Korean Bilingual class?"
(The records had indicated that she was Vietnamese.)

"If someone says they like you (a boy) do you tell them you like them? I don't know what to do. In my country we don't tell, we sort of keep it a secret."

"What is pa roll? My mother wants to know.
(How disturbing to be told that someone is on parole and not know what that means!)

And as I answer, I think, 'There! We've done it again! The Dialogue Journal has opened a door between me and 25 individuals, and like a web, is already pulling us together, even on the first day of school. It's going to be a good year!'

Leslee Reed

FUTURE ISSUES!!!

Our next issues will include:

1. Results from our information questionnaire, (p. 7. this issue). Please share with us your insights and experience. We'll compile the information you send us, and share it back with you.

2. What constitutes a dialogue? What are the necessary conditions? We'll include your comments and observations so please send them. We'll discuss Videologues, and Computer Assisted Dialogues.

3. How do I introduce dialogue journals to my class? What do I tell them the first day?
We'll discuss ways of presenting the journals to your classes, including sample handouts that some of us have used. Be sure to send along your ideas with the questionnaire (Question 2b)

GETTING CONSENT

Not too long ago, we heard from someone who wanted to study dialogue journals and wanted to know if it was really necessary to ask for student and teacher consent: "What if they say no?" Here is our thinking about the issues and problems involved when either the teacher or a third party wants to make some use of the contents of dialogue journals.

1. When is consent necessary? Whose consent do we really need?

Because the journals "work" for both teacher and student only when the contents are private and freed from evaluation, any use of them for data or even for sharing with other teachers in workshops requires the consent of both participants. Even though not legally required, we feel that the consent of students under 18 is ethically required. Of course, parents or guardians and the classroom teacher (if it's someone else) must also be asked for consent. At Gallaudet, instructors are asked to sign the same form as students, and have equal rights to say "no."

2. Do we have to get consent from the students personally? Can young students give informed consent?

This is the exciting part!!--finding a way to explain what we're doing so that even young students will understand the value of sharing some of their conversations with others, particularly other teachers who might be interested in keeping dialogue journals with their students. We've used tape recorders to document student consent when a written form could not be worded simply enough. Not to ask students violates the very reasons we do dialogue journals --if some say no, that's part of the respect for each individual which the journals exemplify.

3. When and how should we ask the students for permission to keep copies of their journals?

Permission whould be requested toward the end of the academic year or term in which dialogue journals are being used. Whether you plan to use the journals for research or simply keep them for yourself, you should explain to the students why you want them, keeping explanations very general.

The permission paper the students, teacher and parents (if applicable) sign should reflect your explanation. Here are two excerpts from such permission papers:

a. to the parents of elementary school students:

"We need your permission for your child's work to be reproduced and published so that other teachers may understand just how this process works. We want you to know that your child will not be identified by name in any of the materials, nor will the name of the school or community be used."

b. to university level students and their teacher:

"I understand that my dialogue journal may be one of the journals selected for a research project. The project will study whether these journals help students communicate better with their instructors."

4. Even though we have permission, are there any limits on what we would use?

Even if students give permission to copy their journals, we need to use discretion before we make any passages public. A particular entry may begin with, 'Don't tell anyone about this,' and the student has forgott It may be a good idea to ask students, especially adults, to go through their journals and mark passages that should be kept privat After that, a good rule of thumb is, 'If in doubt, don't use it.' Any excerpts that could reveal sensitive information about an individual or that hold a country or any gro of people up to ridicule should not be made public.

5. How can we make sure that international students understand that they have freedom to deny access to their journals

Many international students come from countr where teachers are viewed as all-powerful beings worthy of great deference, whose ever wish within the classroom is to be granted without question. Often, students transfer this attitude to their American instructors. As a result, they do not realize nor fully understand that they do have the right to disagree with their teacher, in this case, to deny permission for research on their journals.

Getting consent, cont.

Discussion of consent is therefore best done with these students at the end of the course, when they have had the chance to become acculturated and accustomed to the American teaching style. We must stress to these students that their refusal to give permission in no way will cause any adverse repercussions for them. An alternative may be to ask the students to copy the journals themselves (and reimburse them for the cost). Thus they can delete any pages they wish to remain confidential.

SOME REFLECTIONS -- On Research, Dialogue and Mystery

-Jana Staton

As I reflect on the exciting and unpredictable variety of dialogue journals that have sprung up, and on the excitement I hear from teachers using them, I am puzzled by this continued excitement over a simple, obvious form of human communication. And I grow increasingly uncomfortable about the role of research in relation to this dialogue (but more of that discomfort later.)

How can such a simple act as reading a few lines of writing, and writing back generate this kind of awe--as if we stood again before mystery? One of the hallmarks of the mystic experience in both Eastern and Western traditions, is the experience of the mysterious invading everyday life. Annie Dillard writes about "the cedar tree with the lights in it," the "great door to the present" that opens from eternity into our daily life, through the simple acts of human experience. Martin Buber writes that the world we know and sense is not separate from the world of eternal things: there is only one world. Only the "barrier of separation" created by our attitudes, our ways of perceiving this one world as twofold, has to be destroyed.

For me, working with this very simple, concrete practice of dialogue journal communication has been a chance to glimpse the tree with lights in it, and to find the barriers of separation in my life of which I was not even aware at first, begin to vanish--the barrier between 'student' and 'teacher', young and old, between 'researcher' and 'practitioner.'

- . - . - . - . - . - . - . - . - . - . - . - (dotted line) - . - . - . - . - . - . - . - . - . - . - . - . -

SURVEY OF DIALOGUE READERS

(Results next issue!)

1. How would you classify your interests in dialogue journals?
   ___as researcher
   ___classroom teacher(incl. college)
   ___teacher educator
   ___other ______________________

2. If you are using or have used dialogue journals(where you and the student carried on written conversations), please tell us:

   Students: age______________
   background________________
   ____

   Subject area:________________

   When do students write? How often?
   ____assigned class time
   ____free time during class ________
   ____outside of class

3. Your reasons for using?
   ____
   ____

   Your reasons for using (cont.)
   ____
   ____

4. What do you consider the most important values of the journals:
   for you ______________________
   ____
   for students______________________
   ____

5. Any other comments, insights, problems or topics you'd like to have Dialogue address ?
   ____
   ____

6. Do you want to continue receiving the newsletter even if you have to pay for it? ______________

   NB: If we are going to continue the newsletter, as we'd like to, we'll need to charge $3.00 per year to cover duplication and mailing.(Make checks payable to Jana Staton).

PLEASE TEAR ON DOTTED LINE AND SEND BACK TO US, BY OCTOBER 15, 1983.

REFLECTIONS, cont.

One major goal of my research has been to develop and articulate a theoretical framework for the dialogue journals, to explain the substantial concepts and assumptions on which they rest, drawing on studies of human communication, language acquisition, counseling theory, literacy and social interaction. But all this heavy baggage for explaining why dialogue communication works doesn't begin to explain the glow I see in teachers' eyes as they talk about their dialogues with their students. And I am becoming very aware of the limits of research for explaining much less predicting what happens when two persons who were strangers become friends through a dialogue. All the descriptions of the structure of discourse and explanations of self-disclosure or causal reasoning won't begin to describe or explain the experience of wonder, every time I know I've been understood by another human being, every time I enlarge my understanding of the immensity of another's mind and spirit, so carefully hidden from me by a socially appropriate "face." Perhaps this wonder is greater because the dialogues work best across those visible human differences we believe are so real and meaningful--age, sex, culture or language.

Carl Rogers in A Way of Being has some thoughts about this experience of mutual understanding which only human dialogue seems able to create fully:

> *I have noticed that the more deeply I hear the meanings (of another), the more there is that happens. Almost always, when a person realizes he has been deeply heard, his eyes moisten...in some real sense he is weeping for joy. It is as though he were saying, "thank God, somebody heard me." In such moments I have the fantasy of a prisoner, tapping out day after day a Morse Code message, "Does anybody hear me? Is anybody there?" And finally one day he hears some faint tappings which spell out 'yes'! In that one simple response, he is released from his loneliness, he has become a human being again.* (1980, p.10)

I use dialogue journals to reach out to others, to turn the keys of their cells and release them through dialogue so that together we can begin learning. Then I notice that I too am released from my cell.

DIALOGUE is the newsletter about the uses, benefits, and theory of dialogue journals, a practice of communicating in writing about topics of mutual interest through continuous, functional conversations between (usually) learners and teachers. This newsletter provides an informal means of sharing information, ideas and concerns among those who have begun using dialogue journals in the United States and in other countries. It is an outgrowth of the National Institute of Education research grant to describe and analyse the purposes, structure and benefits of dialogue journal communication (Analysis of Dialogue Journal Writing as a Communicative Event, Center for Applied Linguistics, 1982). For more information about research and practical applications, please write Jana Staton, c/o Center for Applied Linguistics, 3520 Prospect St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20007.

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Dialogue

THE NEWSLETTER ABOUT DIALOGUE JOURNALS

January, 1984

Editors: Jana Staton
Joy Kreeft
Shelley Gutstein

WHAT IS DIALOGUE?

Joy Kreeft, with contributions from Jana Staton and Shelley Gutstein

As we talk with teachers who are adapting dialogue journals to their own situations, we encounter interesting varieties and adaptations of dialogue. Some of what is reported seems to be genuine dialogue, and some does not. This feedback has helped us to reflect on what we and others mean by 'dialogue,' and what the necessary conditions for dialogue journal writing are. This article is an initial attempt to outline some of the necessary characteristics of a dialogue, whether it takes place in a journal or some other form. We will focus on student-teacher interaction in a classroom or other academic context and point out how the characteristics that we have focused on are tied to features, ground rules, or strategies over which teachers, as the initiators of this interaction, have some control.

We may not cover all of the important conditions for dialogue journal writing. If you have others that you think should be included, please write us. You may also know of other interesting and effective uses of dialogue in the classroom. We would love to hear about them.

1. There is an intrinsic purpose or goal for communicating, and participants communicate about real issues that are important to them. They seek genuine information whether it is about each other or about course content, they solve real academic and personal problems, etc. This differs from much classroom interaction in which no real information is exchanged, but the teacher asks questions to check whether the students possess certain information, or, in the case of the language classroom, 'converses' with students in order to aid in student expression of concepts and grammatical structures (e.g., 'Where is the clock?' 'It's on the wall.')

2. Both parties are engaged equally in the interaction--providing and seeking information, introducing and elaborating on topics, etc. This means that one person does not dominate or control the direction of the interaction with questions or directives, but also is willing to respond to the questions of the other person. This also means that the normal unequal status of teacher and student is minimized. The teacher is as involved in the content of the interaction as the student, instead of simply collecting the journals and giving a grade or making evaluative comments such as 'good point.'

3. There is freedom for both participants to choose topics as the topics become important, without fear of censure or reproach. Topics may be suggested by one of the participants, but are not predetermined. This differs from many classroom writing assignments, in which the teacher determines both the topics and kind of writing to be done (expository paragraph, etc.).

4. The communication is frequent and continuous, between the same two parties, over an extended period of time. What constitutes an adequate amount of time is unclear, but it appears that the interaction should occur at least once a week and for at least a couple of months. In order for rapport to develop, it is essential that the same participants continue in the interaction. Notes on message boards are one form of communication with others, but usually do not result in continuous dialogue. We have seen dialogue journal interactions in which one topic is carried on for six or eight months, interspersed with brief mentions of other topics. During this

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time, a lot of information is shared and opinions are expressed.

5. The focus is on meaning and understanding rather than on form. Both participants are primarily interested in the message itself, and there is a continued effort to make the message clear and comprehensible. When the message is not clear, clarification is sought, but this does not take the form of overt correction.

6. The communication is private and not subject to public scrutiny (unless both participants decide, at some later date, that they would like their writing to be made public). Students especially must know that their writing is safe from authority figures and peers. In face-to-face encounters, students often feel shy, and young students or students learning a second language may be afraid to make mistakes in front of the teacher or peers. In the journal they may initially feel unsure, but as they build confidence through the positive feedback that they receive, they soon feel free to express themselves and make mistakes, knowing that only the teacher sees them and that the mistakes are all right.

7. There is time for rereading (or reviewing) and reflection before response. This characteristic and the privacy of the interaction differentiate this kind of dialogue from oral conversation in an important way. The rapid pace of face-to-face interaction places demands on both participants to respond immediately, with little reflection time and can thus cause discomfort for the young student or language learner who may not understand what has been said or know how to reply. In the journal students have time to review what was said and reflect on it before replying, and can ask for clarification if it is needed.

8. The exchange takes place in some tangible form or context, which is available to both parties and can be reviewed at any time. This can be a bound notebook or a video or audio cassette (see below). Thus, students can look back to what was said earlier, either to check their own previous entries or the teacher's. In this way, the teacher's entry is available as a model for vocabulary, grammatical structures, ways of thinking and self-expression, etc.

We have proposed some characteristics and conditions that seem necessary for a genuine dialogue, at least under the constraints of classroom settings. There is an exchange of real information and genuine purposes; both participants are equally engaged in the choice and discussion of the topics; the communication is frequent, continuous and private; there is a focus on meaning rather than form; and there is time for rereading and reflection. All of our interactions with students in dialogue journals may not possess all of these characteristics, but they give us a goal to aim for, and when they are present, the interaction can be very satisfying for both participants.

Two Examples of different forms of dialogue communication

To emphasize that the dialogue journal concept can be adapted to other forms or modes, here are two examples.

Videologues in American Sign Language Classes

Paul Menkis, currently directing the intensive ASL program at Gallaudet College, began experimenting with the concept of a video-dialogue journal instead of a written journal:

"Because to date ASL does not have a written form, the idea of a video-dialogue journal began to take form. This approach met the need to consistently communicate in the target language instead of switching back and forth between two languages. In my classes, where students begin with no knowledge of ASL and in which no voice communication in English is used, I initially use the written dialogue journal as a means of establishing communication and rapport with the students. After about three or four weeks, I gradually introduce the concept of the videologue journal. This three- or four-week time span is necessary to give beginning students time and confidence to acquire and use some basic ASL skills to begin using the language to express their ideas."

"The videologue strategy involves assigning a blank videotape to individual students. Students then videotape themselves in ASL in a specially designed private self-viewing room equipped with cameras and recording equipment (in the Gallaudet College Learning Center). They

videotape their questions, comments, etc., for two to four minutes. Then the videotapes are given to me for my viewing and response. While I'm viewing the tape, I make notes on their comments and questions and on their progress in using ASL. Then I respond in ASL on their individual tapes and return them to the students at the next class meeting for their own viewing and continued responses."

For more information, write or call H.P. Menkis, Dept. of Sign Communication, Gallaudet College, Washington, D.C. 20002, (202) 651-5633, voice or TTY.

Oral letters

Andrew Soria has used Oral Letters with university level EFL students. Oral letters consist of cassette tapes (which the students provide) on which the students record a spoken message to their teacher. Students use their own cassette recorders or machines in the language laboratory. After they have recorded their message, they rewind the tape to the beginning of that message, clearly marking which side of the tape it is on. The teacher listens to the message and records a response immediately following it on the tape, again rewinding to the beginning of the message. Students are encouraged to speak freely about any topic they like, without a script. The tapes are private; no one other than the participants listens to them.

Andrew reports that one of the more interesting 'letters' was that of a Chinese student he taught several years ago. The student explained about Chinese flute music and included on the tape examples of his own playing of a variety of different Chinese flutes.!

Andrew Soria can be contacted at 17765 N. Shore Estate Rd., Spring Lake, Mich. 49456. (616) 842-9011.

THE AGONY OF THE SELF-EMPLOYED

How am I supposed to live on what you're paying me?
We've been over this before! It's all I can afford!
That's a lie!
Watch your mouth! Get back to work! We'll discuss it later!
Strike! Strike!
You're in violation of Taft-Hartley!

REFLECTIONS ON DIALOGUE

...What I feel like telling you today is that the world needs real dialogue, that falsehood is just as much the opposite of dialogue as is silence, and that the only possible dialogue is the kind between people who remain what they are and speak their minds...we must pay attention to what unites us rather than to what separates us.

...We are faced with evil. And, as for me, I feel rather as Augustine did before becoming a Christian when he said: 'I tried to find the source of evil and I got nowhere.' But it is also true that I, and a few others, know what must be done, if not to reduce evil, at least not to add to it. Perhaps we cannot prevent this world from being a world in which children are tortured. But we can reduce the number of tortured children. And if you don't help us, who else in the world can help us to do this?

Between the forces of terror and the forces of dialogue, a great unequal battle has begun. I have nothing but reasonable illusions as to the outcome of that battle. But I believe it must be fought, and I know that certain men at least have resolved to do so...The program for the future is either a permanent dialogue or the solemn and significant putting to death of any who have experienced dialogue...after an interval of two thousand years we may see the sacrifice of Socrates repeated several times. Albert Camus, in an essay in 'The Unbeliever and Christians,' 1948.

CURRENT RESEARCH

More Dissertations in Progress

Bonita Blazer. Development of writing in kindergarten: Speaking and writing relationships. Univ. of Penn.

Jack Farley. A descriptive analysis of the journal writing abilities of a group of educable mentally retarded young adults. Univ. of Cincinnati.

Mary Rivkin is using dialogue journals to document changes in attitudes of early education majors toward the educational value of children's play. Univ. of Md.

(Cont. on p. 7)

WHO ARE WE?

Joe Koltisko

We thought you might want to know who else reads Dialogue. Right now (January, 1984) our mailing list has 300 individuals and grows by 10-20 people a month. About 28% are teachers or counselors in the U.S., while 55% are educational researchers, many of whom also teach in graduate departments of education. 7% work abroad, 5% are teacher-trainers or school administrators, and 5% work with the deaf.

As a way of finding out more about what people do with dialogue journals, we summarized the responses to our 'Survey Questionnaire' in the last issue, and telephoned a sample of people to find out how journals are being adapted to different settings and to meet different needs.

Different Needs

Elizabeth Turner, in South Australia, finds that dialogue journals encourage her 15-year-old deaf students to question things happening around them. For Carol Harmatz's adult ESL students in Washington, D.C., the journals provide a confidence builder and emotional outlet for their difficulties in adapting to a new culture. Carol Urquhart of Willis College, Ottawa, mentions that dialogue journals sensitize her to the linguistic and psychological needs of her immigrant students.

Those we spoke with have adapted dialogue journals to suit their particular needs. Diane DeFord and Pat Rigg of Ohio State University use 'reaction folders' with their student teachers, many of whom use a similar method when they become teachers themselves. The reaction folder is more focused and perhaps less frequent than the dialogue journal, but it retains the notion of dialogue. Daniel McLaughlin, at the Rock Point Community School in Chinle, Arizona, says that dialogue writing enables him to understand and assist students with severe emotional problems, who would never have 'opened up' in conversation.

Presentations at Conferences

The use of dialogue journals is beginning to come up at educational conferences. Carolyn Kessler of the University of San Antonio says that Christine Meloni's presentation on dialogue journals at the Fall Conference of TEXTESOL was so successful that many teachers have implemented them. One teacher is even using it with her husband! They are on different schedules, and this is one way to keep in touch. Sarah Hudelson of Florida International University discussed dialogue journals in the course of a series of ten workshops for fifty teachers of bilingual children, as well as using them with her own university classes. This past summer, the South Bay Writing Project in California included presentations for teacher consultants on dialogue journals by Patricia Nichols of San Jose State's English department. (A letter from Patricit in early 1982, one of the first we received, helped spur us to start this newsletter.)

As part of the California Writing Project at UCLA, Leslee Reed, Selma Horowitz and Rose White have been talking to teachers in many Southern California school districts for the past three years about implementing dialogue journals in first and second language classrooms.

We are also finding that more non-English teachers are using dialogue journals. Lucille McCarthy, of Baltimore, writes that they were used with great success in a week-long intensive program last summer designed to teach ten- to fourteen-year-olds about life in Victorian Philadelphia. The children were able to pin down what they had seen and learned, and put themselves in the historical context.

Research Uses

Our survey also uncovered a number of dissertations planned or in progress in which dialogue journals serve as an effective means of recording on a daily basis student reactions and perceptions about events and concerns, as well as several in which the dialogue journal interactions themselves are being studied (see pg. 7). Most of the researchers are also using dialogue writing in some form in their teaching or training, and many teachers have begun to do research, using their dialogue journals as data.

Our telephone survey and your responses have shown that dialogue journal users and uses continue to diversify to meet the individual needs and situations of students and teachers. If we've left out yours, please send us a note. We want this to be a continuing dialogue.

LESLEE'S PAGE

Dialogue Journals--An Important Classroom Management Tool.

--Leslee Reed

As the day begins and my class comes into the classroom, the very first thing most students do is pick up their journal and read my reply to their previous entry. Sometimes they are especially eager to respond and begin writing before they have removed their jackets. Other times they read, put away their jackets and get out their supplies for the morning, and while waiting for class to begin, they re-read and begin writing. This gives me time to check attendance and get the business of the day underway. For those who have been inspired to reply and for those who have had something interesting happen overnight, it is time to write, and they do!

As the day proceeds, the journals remain visible, available for the few moments when an assignment is completed and there is a bit of time for writing. If an assignment is unintelligible, too difficult or too easy, out come the journals and the writing goes on. Because the students write throughout the day, I have ongoing daily feedback and the journals serve as an important aid to my management of the flow of the classroom.

I invite my students to help me to become a better teacher, so they are encouraged to evaluate and even criticize lessons. As they do so, I ask them to become more specific in letting me know why a lesson was dull or boring. Frequently they make suggestions about how we should do something or how I may be more helpful to a specific student. Occasionally they suggest a lesson topic--perhaps there is something they're interested in, they have seen or heard about on TV, or we have discussed in class and they wish to know more about.

Some student actions are disruptive and need my immediate attention. After being reprimanded in class, the student may use the journal to deny that he/she was as guilty as the accusation implied or to explain why or how that particular action came about. If the student is very angry, the journal may become a place to vent anger and a student may even write, "I hate you..." Frequently by the end of the day, that same student is busily erasing that entry and writing a new one.

Using the written exchange provides me a way of complimenting a student for an especially well done bit of work, a particular behavior toward another student or the fulfillment of a responsibility in the classroom. A new piece of clothing warrants a comment, which, written in the privacy of the journal is savored by the recipient, and the student without new clothing does not suddenly feel that his own clothing is somehow not so good.

The privacy of the journal provides time and a place for those happenings which are painful to discuss, the death of a family member, the impending divorce of someone very close, the fears that the family may not be able to stay in their home or the agony of having a parent who is not succeeding in this country and is contemplating returning to the native country. Sibling problems or interclass difficulties shared with someone who is non-judgemental are easier to bear simply because someone has "heard." Knowing that someone else knows your problems creates a bond with that person.

At times there are things that a student wants desperately to tell about. One day in class we discussed ghosts and whether or not we believed in them. This inspired one student to write a 4-page narrative about ghosts. To have the time and the attention of the teacher long enough to relate that entire story is a near impossibility, but the journal gives time and space for those issues or topics which need retelling. Writing also relieves the class from having to sit and listen for a long time to just one person, when they, too, have something of equal importance to tell. For the student who always has something of such importance that it cannot possibly wait, the journal provides the opportunity to fully relate the information.

Classroom management is also aided by students' entries that tell of their need for specific materials and supplies. This not only helps me to know what individuals need to work with, but it helps make the students aware of the necessity for specificity and detail. If the request is not specific as to quantity, size, color and amount, I cannot be very helpful, and materials are delayed until the specifications are clarified.

Yes, as an adjunct to daily classroom management the journal fills the bill!

HOW TO GET STARTED

Shelley Gutstein

Often teachers are concerned about how to present Dialogue Journals to their students--how to get the students to "do it right." Our experience has been that the journals are one of the greatest self-teaching devices that exists, and that explaining the journals to classes is less of a problem than most people think.

What we mean by this is that with adequate introduction to the concepts of dialogue journal writing on the first day, most procedural problems can be worked out using the journals themselves. What should this introduction consist of? While every teacher will present journals to the class in his/her own way, there are some general concepts that should be conveyed from the outset. First, the students should be told that their dialogue journal is a place where they and the teacher will communicate, "talk," about anything they want to talk about; second, they should know that the journal will not be evaluated or graded in any way. Last, the journal is private and no one else will read it. We haven't found it helpful to say that the will journals improve the students' grammar, writing or reading.

Some teachers give out brief handouts to clarify the concepts and any other requirements, especially with beginning second language students. A handout I often use with beginning ESL students (adults) looks like this:

> *A dialogue journal is a very special kind of writing. It helps you learn to think and write in English. Every day you will write for 10 minutes. I will take your journals at the end of class, write back to you, and give you your journal at the beginning of class.*
>
> *Here are some things to remember:*
>
> 1. *Please use a black pen and write on one side of the paper only.*
> 2. *Please include the date each time you write.*
> 3. *Write as much as you like, but please write at least 5 lines a day.*
> 4. *Your journal is confidential. This means I will not show or tell anyone what you write.*

It is important to keep the handout clear, short and concise. We don't want to overwhelm the student or make the journals seem homework- or test-like. Adults seem to need and benefit from a handout more than younger students.

Once the students have their notebooks and are ready to write, they usually produce appropriate journal entries. Teachers may write a sample entry on the blackboard to help the students begin. We find, though, that most students will write original first entries.

With students who 'don't get the idea,' we have found that, in most cases, we can work out the misunderstanding within the journal itself. Consider the journal of Antonio, a 19-year-old Venezuelan student. He thought the Dialogue Journal was a letter exchange, and began the first day by addressing me using a fictional name:

> *My dear Eve:*
> *How are you? I'm very well here.*
> *Washington it's big and old and Oh, yes the buildings are lovely so much......*
> *A. Canaan M.*

In my response, I just repeated what I had said in class:

> *Antonio, this book is to be a conversation between you and me. So you can write directly to me, ask me questions, tell me anything you wish. OK?*

The second day, Antonio tried again, with a second name for me, but a much more appropriate comment:

> *Lovely Cecilia:*
> *In my first day of class my grammar its so bad but I'm trying......*
> *Antonio J. C. M.*

I responded that he did not need to use a formal letter style:

> *This is a conversation between you and me! If you are not sure what to do, please ask me.*

In his third entry, Antonio had gotten the feeling for a direct communication:

> *Hi! Today the Metro one more time! It's the second time. . . Excuse me because it's 9:15. About the homework, I like it but I don't know more things. The tenses, it's so difficult for me. We are a lot of people for you...*

We see from Antonio's journal that the journal itself is a very powerful vehicle for "teaching" students how to write a dialogue journal. We have learned that presenting the journals to students is much less complitated than it seems at the beginning.

NOTES FROM THE FIELD

From Australia, Elizabeth Turner writes about the difference that dialogue journals have made in teaching deaf students of deaf parents who are unfamiliar with spoken or written English.

> *At first W. wasn't keen on journals and kept his entries to a bare minimum (three or four lines) but now has really let fly with the pen and dashes off lengthy entries every night. For W. there is equal value in reading my reply. When I return the journals, W. turns his back on the things of the present to run his eyes over my words, then looks up with a nod or a smile. He says so little in class (it's an oral school) that for a while I became quite worried about him. I'm so relieved to know that W. will write about his feelings, which enables me to keep in touch with the ups and downs in his life...As I look over my response to W.'s entry, I see that some of my sentences are quite complicated grammaticallly.*
>
> *If you have time, I would be interested to know who else in Australia is using dialogue journals.*
>
> Elizabeth Turner
> Unit 1, 212 Torrens Rd.
> Renown Park, South Australia, SW

Jeanina Umana uses dialogue journals in her English classes in Costa Rica. At first her students used Spanish almost exclusively, but little by little they began to use English words, then sentences, until they finally wrote whole paragraphs in English. She always answers in English, no matter what language they write in.

> *Since our course is structured according to syntactic criteria, when the students write, they force themselves to be ahead of what we are doing in class. For example, very early I found things like, "I want that you tell me about..." According to the grammatical sequencing for the course, that sort of embedding comes toward the very end. But, since they were trying to use it, I taught it earlier and they learned it with no pain because they saw the need for it. Verb tenses was the area in which I saw the most improvement throughout the semester. To handle time relationships is very difficult to teach in EFL, but if you really have a need to say something and get it across, then you learn to do it better than by working out someone else's exercises. The journals have convinced me that we need a completely different approach to language teaching, and I have volunteered to teach a pilot course that focuses totally on communicative competence.*

Dissertations Completed

Marcia Markman. Teacher-student dialogue writing in a college composition course: Effects upon writing performance and attitudes. Univ. of Maryland. 12-83.

Vera Milz. A psycholinguistic description of the development of writing in selected first grade students. Way Element. School, Bloomfield Hills, Mich.

Conference Presentations

Jessie Roderick and Jana Staton. Dialogue journal writing: Insights for Pre-service and in-service education. Spring Conference of the NCTE, Columbus, Ohio, April 12-14, 1984.

Jana Staton. Learning to play the game: What we can learn from the writing of profoundly deaf students. AERA, New Orleans, April, 1984.

Please send in information about dissertations and forthcoming papers, etc. Next issue will be published May, 1984.

SUBSCRIPTION POLICY

We now have 300 names on our mailing list, and we encourage you to xerox and share the newsletter with others. Since we began charging a modest fee (now $3.00 for 3 issues a year) about 100 of you wonderful people have sent in some contribution. ANY DONATION will keep you on the subscriber's list, as it lets us know you are interested the Dialogue. Sometime in the future we may have to drop names of people who have never paid, but we'll put that day off as long as possible. (which means until our out-of-pocket losses per issue start to climb beyond $25.00. There, now, don't you feel guilty?)

HAVING TROUBLE FINDING LIGHTWEIGHT BOUND COMPOSITION BOOKS?

Write us if you would like information about printing firms which carry or will make up bulk orders (1000 OR MORE COPIES) of bound composition books, with lightweight, plain covers, which can have 'Dialogue Journal' and your institution name printed on them. Prices about 50¢, page count variable, and covers are lightweight. Write Joy Kreeft or Jana Staton (at CAL address) for an information sheet with addresses and phone numbers.

NEXT ISSUE

Focus on a Teacher. Our next issue (and those following) will feature one teacher using dialogue journals, including details on the setting and particular use made of dialogue journals, the perceived benefits, and some results. If you know of someone who is using dialogue journals in an interesting way or in a unique situtation and who should be featured in the newsletter, please contact us.

How to encourage reluctant students to communicate. In response to several urgent requests from readers, Leslee Reed will discuss this problem, and would like any contributions you can send us about what has worked for you.

Interpersonal uses of dialogue journals outside the classroom. Yes, there are other situations in which we find dialogue journals being used. We want to describe three important ones, and will appreciate any examples of these, or others:

- between parents and children
- between wives and husbands, and those contemplating a permanent relationship (examples will, of course, be carefully edited!)
- between co-workers, such as principals and teachers (we know of two schools where this happens), or colleagues in research.

DIALOGUE is the newsletter about the uses, benefits, and theory of dialogue journals, a practice of communicating in writing about topics of mutual interest through continuous, functional conversations between (usually) learners and teachers. This newsletter provides an informal menas of sharing information, ideas and concerns among those who have begun using dialogue journals in the United States and in other countries. It is an outgrowth of the National Institute of Education research grant to describe and analyse the purposes, structure and benefits of dialogue journal communication (*Analysis of Dialogue Journal Writing as a Communicative Event*, Center for Applied Linguistics, 1982). For more information about research and practical applications, please write Jana Staton, c/o Center for Applied Linguistics, 3520 Prospect St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20007.

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Dialogue

July, 1984

Editors: Jana Staton
Joy Kreeft
Shelley Gutstein

INTERPERSONAL USES OF DIALOGUE JOURNALS

Jana Staton

Oh, the comfort, the inexpressible comfort of feeling safe with a person, neither having to weigh thoughts nor measure words, but pouring them right out just as they are, chaff and grain alike; certain that a faithful hand will take and sift them, keep what is worth keeping and then with the breath of kindness, blow the rest away.
George Eliot

Dialogue journal writing began as a way to overcome the barriers to communication between students and teachers. But many of us, after six months or a year of sharing our students' lives and thoughts in this way, have asked, "Why can't I have the same relationship with people in my own life? If only I could talk this way to _____." For those of you who haven't tried a dialogue journal with another person in your life--a child, parent, principal, husband or wife (or the practical equivalent)--we want to share some of what we and others have learned from using dialogue journals to create sustained, interactive conversations in our own families and at work. We have collected observations from people now using journals and samples of their writing. (Because of the nature of these journals, we have, of course, kept the identity of our contributors private.)

One point brought up by those we interviewed is that dialogue journals allow both persons to be much more honest than in face-to-face encounters. One person observed, "I can afford to be somewhat critical in the dialogue journal... I don't think at this point in our relationship I'd risk that kind of honest criticism if I were talking." Most of our informants point out that topics can be discussed in the journal which are too uncomfortable to bring up initially in face-to-face conversations. Sometimes these topics are talked about later, and sometimes they are resolved in the journal itself.

Another observation was that there was so much to be learned through the interaction. A principal who began keeping dialogue journals with her teachers was amazed at how much she learned about them, when she had thought she already knew everyone and their concerns rather well. A mother who kept a dialogue journal with her teenage son found that the journal opened up a number of new relationships all at once, as her son began addresing his entries to her in her different roles: "To the one who pays the bills," for example. These various labels helped her understand the complexity of their relationship and his perceptions of her. The dialogue journal allowed them both to discuss feelings and topics for which there was neither time nor courage to discuss when she came home late from a demanding job and the major concern of both was an immediate task (like fixing dinner).

A part of an entry in one dialogue journal provides a perceptive insight into how the written dialogue can affect the quality of a relationship:

"More and more, I feel that writing in the journal permits me to listen to you better when we're together. By having gotten things off my mind in the journal, they're no longer there, occupying brain space and commanding attention and excluding what you're saying at the time and want me to hear...Listening requires effort and concentration and the journal leaves my mind free to concentrate."

(Continued on p. 2)

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(Interpersonal Uses, cont. from page 1)

Successful Situations for Using Dialogue Journals

In our survey, we have found that the following kinds of pairings have worked well: Parents and teenage children (especially mothers and sons); students going away to college and one parent (we know of a daugther and father); an adult and an older parent who live some distance apart; adult couples, married or considering it; colleagues conducting research (our secret weapon in the NIE study); principals and teachers. All of these partnerships share some important conditions which seem to facilitate the dialogue: (1) Both persons are aware of some barriers to the kind of mutual communication and understanding they need, and there is a mutual willingness to try a new channel for communication; (2) Some issues, goals, or a common task exist as a shared framework to provide topics; (3) There is a lack of time for mutually convenient, one-on-one conversations about important topics, even though the two people see each other every day; (4) Very often, these successful pairs turn out to be male-female combinations.

In contrast to these successful situations, one combination which has not worked well is a couple in which only one partner feels the need to open a second channel of communication. Unlike the classroom in which the teacher can require this dialogue, an interpersonal journal must be truly voluntary, and an initial degree of mutual willingness to try it is crucial. The second pairing which has not worked well thus far is that of a parent and an elementary school-age child (6-10 years old). Several friends have tried to get their young children to keep dialogue journals with them as a way to encourage them to "write more" or to enjoy writing and reading. In the three instances we know of personally, none of the children got very excited about it and the dialogues petered out quickly. Given the ease with which children as young as five years begin a dialogue journal with their teachers, this difficulty is somewhat puzzling. The reason may be that at this age children are not as aware of the need to communicate explicitly with their parents, and can't understand the reason for writing down things they can just as easily say to a parent they feel close to. However, parents separated from their children might find that a dialogue journal would work well, because the physical separation creates an awareness of the functional value of the journal for the child. One interesting fact from parents who have been able to maintain a journal with a child is that these dialogues seem to be effective only on a time-limited basis, and may not last even as long as a year. It may be that with children, there are years of their lives in which a private conversation on paper with one parent is needed and useful, while the next year, the need for the dialogue diminishes.

Considerations for Getting Started

Just as in the classroom, there are some logistical considerations which seem to help the dialogue get started. A visually attractive form seems to make a difference--all of us are sensitive to size and color, and to materials that symbolize our own values. One couple reports that their dialogue journals have to be written in royal blue spiral notebooks. A journal that looks special communicates the value of the relationship itself. Finding a convenient place to leave the journal when an entry is completed allows the journal to be passed back and forth easily and without complicated schedules (in-baskets and mail boxes at work do fine; at home you may need to find a private place to leave it). Perhaps most important, we have found that formal or fixed schedules probably need to be avoided with interpersonal journals. The dialogue seems to work best when the journal can flow back and forth as topics surface which need discussion. Some mutual obligation, like not letting more than a week pass without at least one exchange, needs to be established, but within that framework, a flexible schedule actually encourages sustained conversation. Guilt feelings are not conducive to dialogue.

We thought an instance from a first exchange might demonstrate the way that the dialogue journal got started for a couple of people, growing out of a mutual frustration, as these first entries show (both persons were familiar with the use of dialogue journals in classroom settings):

A: *I am writing this to you because right now I feel very uncomfortable about talking to you. Lately (the past two weeks) we haven't seemed to be able to "match"--I feel I am missing your signal* *and you miss mine, unless I pout or look unhappy. Comments, rebuttals, even discussions of entirely different issues would be welcomed.*

B: *I didn't feel like writing yesterday so I didn't. I'm not sure that I feel like it today either...Maybe this approach will help keep communication open. It's clear that I haven't learned to talk and I despair at ever learning it very well. There are too many risks in talking...*

Some Reflections

As I reflect on the value to me of keeping an interpersonal journal--with a summer intern, with my father, with colleagues at work, and with my husband, what comes to mind is the capacity of the written dialogue to overcome the constant mismatch between my inner, life experience and that of others. Our physical lives occur in and are greatly constrained by chronological time (Chronos), while our mental, spiritual, and emotional lives occur in Kairos time, which is governed by appropriateness or "rightness" (a distinction in the Greek which Fred Erickson recalled to our thinking). When I live or work closely with someone, we spend time together in direct contact, but our minds' own inner journeys are not dictated or even in tune with external time or events, and so we can never exactly match in external time. Physical meetings and talk must occur when it is physically possible for us to get together, not when it is most appropirate for both of us to talk and listen. In fact, one cannot always predict or schedule the most appropriate times to communicate. I see this difference between our outer, physical lives and our inner selves as a permanent part of the human condition and therefore not one likely to change even in the best of families, or marriages, or work relationships. A written medium--dialogue journal, letter, or computer communication through an electronic mail system--allows my inner self to listen and to speak when it is the right time for me, and allows the other person the same opportunity.

STRATEGIES FOR MAINTAINING JOURNAL WRITING -
Keeping the door open

Leslee Reed

Every class has its share of students who would rather not be bothered with any of the class activities, and responding in the dialogue journal is no exception. Although most students really enjoy the dialogue and begin with great enthusiasm, there are those who respond reluctantly and with what appears to be indifference. Their routine approach may be, "I had a good day. Lunch was good. The game was fun." or, "It was a good day. We had a good recess. I hope you had a good day." To be sure, they are following the instructions in my class--writing 3 sentences daily--and technically they are fulfilling the requirement. But these reluctant students sometimes take months to realize that the journal is not going away and they may as well avail themselves of this daily opportunity to communicate privately with me. It seems that those who have the greatest need to communicate have the most trouble getting started. But time and the sense of security that comes from knowing that I care about them and will not give up on them helps them to eventually come around to writing. When they do (be forewarned!) there is sometimes a veritable flood of problems that emerge--problems which I can only acknowledge and try to understand.

To help teachers encourage these reluctant students, here are some things that have worked for me:

1. After the initial period of getting to know each other comes the time of learning to share interests and "discuss" ideas together. When the student's topics seem mundane or boring, ask some pertinent questions; such as an opinion about a lesson, an assembly, the new bulletin board or any topic which seems to be of interest. Instead of just writing, "Tell me about it," be specific--"Do you think the assembly was too long or do you think all of the time spent there was necessary?" "How much of the assembly was worthwhile?" "Which part of the assembly was the most interesting?" When an opinion is given, feel free to disagree or agree so that there is a genuine exchange of ideas. Try to allow your own feelings to show--"I don't agree with you

(Cont. on page 5)

PUBLICATIONS ON DIALOGUE JOURNALS

Dissertations

Jaffer, Deborah. *Young Writers in Search of an Audience*. Univ. of Penn. May, 1984.

Kreeft, Joy. *Analysis of Student-Teacher Interactive Writing in the Learning of English as a Second Language*. Georgetown Univ. October, 1984.

Markman, Marsha. *Teacher-Student Dialogue Writing in A College Composition Course: Effects Upon Writing Performance and Attitudes*. Univ. of MD. December, 1983.

Staton, Jana. *The Interactional Acquisition of Practical Reasoning in Early Adolescence: A Study of Dialogue Journals.* UCLA June, 1984.

Articles

Albertini, John and Meath-Lang, Bonnie. Forthcoming article on dialogue journal use with college-age deaf writers, NTIU, in *Journal of Curriculum Inquiry*.

Atwell, Nancie. "Writing and Reading Literature from the Inside Out." *Language Arts*, *61*, 3, March, 1984.

Davis, Fran. "Why You Call Me Emigrant?: Dialogue Journal Writing with Migrant Youth." *Childhood Education*, Nov./Dec. 1983.

Gutstein, Shelley P. "Using Language Functions to Measure Fluency." ERIC number to be announced, June, 1984.

Kreeft, Joy. "Dialogue Writing: Bridge from Talk to Essay Writing." *Language Arts*, *61*, 2, February, 1984.

Kreeft, Joy. "Why Not Really Communicate?--Using Dialogue Journals." *WATESOL Working Papers*, 1, Winter 1983-84.

Staton, Jana. "Writing and Counseling: Using a Dialogue Journal." *Language Arts*, *57*, 5, May, 1980.

Reports

Analysis of Dialogue Journal Writing as a Communicative Event. J. Staton, R. Shuy, J. Kreeft and Mrs. R. Final Report, National Institute of Education Grant No. G-80-0122, Center for Applied Linguistics, Washington, D.C. January, 1982. (ERIC No.: Vol. I: ED 214 196; Vol. II: ED 214 197.

Books and Book Chapters

Staton, Jana. "Thinking Together: The Role of Language Interaction in Children's Reasoning." In C. Thaiss and C. Suhor. (Eds.) *Speaking and Writing, K-12*. NCTE, Fall, 1984.

Staton, Shuy, Kreeft, and Reed. *Interactive Writing in Dialogue Journals: Linguistic, Social and Cognitive Views. In the Writing Series, (M. Farr, Ed.)* Ablex, 1985.

ARTICLES ABOUT DIALOGUE JOURNAL WRITING

As new articles about dialogue journal writing are published, they will be summarized in the newsletter. Below is a summary of three of the articles in this issue's list of publications.

Frances A. Davis. 1983. "Why you call me Emigrant?": Dialogue journal writing with migrant youth. *Childhood Education*, Nov.-Dec

This article provides a rationale and some methods for using dialogue journals with minority language groups in the U.S., along with several examples of student and counselor writing. Dialogue journals were used by New Jersey Project MAP-S as part of a migrant education project funded by the U.S. Office of Education. The project was designed to help migrant junior and senior high school youth obtain career and occupational information and an understanding of their career goals. As was hoped, the students quickly moved in their dialogue journals from personal writing to focus on their career plans and to seek necessary career-related information from their counselors. As a result, the journals served as a means for fulfilling many of the project goals. The writing practice lead to greater fluency in writing; important occupational information was exchanged; and close personal ties developed between the students and counselors, so that counselors could use the journals to develop the students' self-concepts.

(Continued on page 5)

(Articles, cont. from page 4)

Joy Kreeft. 1984. Dialogue writing--Bridge from talk to essay writing. Language Arts. Vol. 61. No. 2.

This article addresses the question of how dialogue journals can help to develop students' writing skills. Many examples of teacher and student writing highlight teacher stategies and student growth. The article shows how dialogue writing bridges the gap between oral, face-to-face conversation, which is interactive, and writing, which is usually accomplished by the writer alone, without interactive help from an interlocutor. Thus, dialogue writing provides a means for students to move naturally from a skill they already know when they enter school, interactive communication, to a new skill, essayist-type writing. Research on the differing characteristics of spoken and written communication is reviewed, the characteristics of dialogue journal writing that promote effective writing are discussed, and one student's developing competence in writing over ten month's time is studied in detail.

Nancie Atwell. 1984. Writing and reading literature from the inside out. Language Arts. Vol. 61, No. 3.

How do students become "insiders" to the world of reading and writing? Atwell wanted her eighth grade students to become comfortable citizens--critics, enthusiasts, and participants--in the literate world, and one day started written "reading conferences," in the form of letters that she and her 70(!) students wrote to each other about the books they read. In the letters they shared information about good books and authors, praised and criticized authors' styles, and reflected on their own reading and writing experience. She describes their letters as "a dining room table with 70 chairs around it"--a place where she and her students, as partners in the enterprise, entered the world of reading and writing and established themselves as expert readers and writers. The article describes in detail the progress of two of her students, with provocative samples from the letters. This article is especially important for secondary school teachers who want to focus on content in the journals, or who would like to do dialogue writing but have too many students for a daily journal exchange with each student.

(Strategies, continued from page 3)

because I really don't like that kind of music, but I'm glad some people do!" or, "You and I agree! That was an exciting and interesting idea the speaker presented."

2. Focus on the activities of your students; ask questions that show you have noticed them, and that you are interested. "Do you think we should work on the map or the outline first?" "You seem to be going along very well. Which book (or materials) will you need next?" or, "How much of the math was too easy for you? You seemed to go right through the work today." or conversely "You seemed to hesitate on your math assignment. Could I help you? Were you having trouble with the steps or was it the word problems?" Negative comments may be required. "You and Jay were having a problem today. How did it start?" or, "Too bad you were so sleepy today. Were you not feeling well or were you just tired?"

3. Everyone has emotions. If you note some change in a student, you might comment on it. "How happy you seemed today. There must have been something special happening. What was it?" Or you could mention your own feelings, "Did you notice how angry I was? Do you know why? What do you think I could do to prevent that from happening again?"

4. Encourage them to share interesting books and activities with you. "You are reading a book I have never read. Do you think I would enjoy reading it when you are finished with it?" or "I've just finished reading The Borrowers. It is so funny that you might enjoy it if you like funny, impossible books. Do you?"

5. When you have noticed a problem between class members you can enlist help. "It was too bad that John was so angry today. It spoiled the game for him and for the class. Could you help him when you see him becoming so upset? You could ask him to take a walk with you, or even suggest that he come talk to you about the problem. Does that seem possible? Do you have any ideas that would help me to help him?" How important we feel when someone in authority thinks enough of us to ask for our help!

6. Try to learn from your students by asking about something you have no idea

(Continued on p. 6)

(Strategies, continued from page 5)

about. "Does the Culture Club play punk rock or just rock music? Have you many of their records? Which is your favorite? Do they use synthesizers?" "How is a low-rider different from my car?" "Why do you think the Angels will win?" "Is our team better than theirs? How do you know?" "How did you celebrate your birthday? At our house the birthday person gets to decide what we will have for their birthday dinner. Do you have any customs like that?"

Most of all, I want to emphasize the importance of having and showing a genuine interest in the student's hobbies, attitudes and responses. This helps you to learn about your students, and helps them to realize that you are human. Encourage them to teach you, to tell you things you did not know, to share ideas and happenings. And remember that every student will not write a glowing gem of an entry every day. When an entry has been particularly interesting, don't hesitate to show your enthusiasm.

Just as a good conversation is enlightening, good journal entries should enlighten. Being an interested, eager listener makes you a good conversationalist. The same skills make your journal entries interesting and encourage responses that grow!

NOTES FROM THE FIELD

Herbert Hilsen of Cali, Colombia comments on his experience with dialogue journal writing:

"The technique develops an amazing fluency rather quickly. The communication is genuine. Students and teacher come to know each other better. And students do not freeze up when they have to write, nor depend on artificial models.

"Things I remember from people's dialogue journals are very useful to me now when I meet them. I have a strong visual orientation, and having read these ideas I find they stick better than just from ordinary conversation.

"Ideas from students' dialogue journals are extremely useful for oral activities. Thanks to remembering what I read in dialogue journals, I am never at a loss for oral interview or exam material later."

Nancie Atwell uses dialogue journals with students studying literature in an elementary school in Maine. She writes about her impressions of her students' experience using peer journals:

"You may be interested to know that my writing/reading students are now carrying on dialogues with each other--as well as continuing to write to me. This talk is also wonderful, and very different from their dialogues with me. Although the subject is still literature, the tone is more informal and the content is pure gossip-about-books. It's as if lit. is mundane and everyday--something kids just naturally chant about. And these letters are very, very funny.

"Among all the good things resulting from kid-to-kid literary dialogue is the practical issue of replicability. Teachers I talk to just about die at the notion of sustaining correspondence with 75-125 secondary level kids. Opening up the possibility of peer and teacher correspondence has cut my four-hours-per-evening letter writing sessions in half."

Nancy Rhodes has been using dialogue journals for the past year in Montgomery County Maryland's adult education program. The students in her classes come from a wide range of countries and are well-educated in their native languages:

"My main purpose for using journals is to get the students more accustomed to putting their thoughts down on paper. This turns out to be a major task for many of them. Although the majority of the students have a good command of the spoken language, most of them have little, if any, practice in any type of writing in English, whether it be business letters, notes to friends, or academic essays.

"At the beginning of each semester I often hear a lot of complaints about keeping a journal, and I am aware that for many of them it is difficult to write something in a foreign language for the first time in their life. For this reason, I was interested to know, at the end of the semester, what were the students' views of what they had learned from their journal writing. Their written responses were quite revealing. Perhaps we can learn more about what the students actually gain from journal writing from their own comments than from what we teachers think they will learn.

(Continued on page 7)

(Notes, continued from page 6)

"A Japanese student commented on how journal writing helped her to start thinking in English, which she hopes will help improve her speaking ability."

> *Writing dialogue journal is very useful for me. Because I've very much progressed hearing ability in this class, but not enough to speak. Usually I think in Japanese at first and translate into English. It's not good. I'll have to think in English. When I write dialogue journal in a short time, I'm used to try thinking in English and I believe it'll certainly improve my English conversation ability.*

"A Colombian woman commented that her practice in journal writing has helped her in her job."

> *Now in my volunteer job I have to do the nutritional assessment and I am very happy because the nurses and the dietitian can understand me my English writing and I know the dialogue journals have helped me a lot.*

Carol Severino, who teaches university-level writing classes at the University of Illinois, Chicago, conducted a pilot study last fall in which one class used dialogue journals and the other class used an interesting textbook. The dialogue journal class did better on the final essay exam, and their writing anxiety, measured by Daly's scale, increased less than the textbook class. There were also fewer absences from class and tutoring sessions, better class discussions, and generally a more integrated feeling in the dialogue journal class. Carol hopes to do a larger-scale study for her dissertation. She would appreciate suggestions from anyone doing studies of how dialogue journals improve writing performance and attitudes toward writing!

Carol has a wonderful handout that she gives to her writing classes to introduce dialogue journals use. If you would like a copy, send us with a self-addressed, stamped envelope and we'll send you one.

Finally, The Washington Post mentions dialogue journals in an article discussing the multi-ethnic population of Arlington, Virginia and its impact on the Arlington County Public Schools. The article discusses the problems foreign born children encounter in adjusting to American schools and how the schools cope with and help the children. These children, who often have come from war zones or other turbulent areas, experience culture shock, language problems, and may withdraw entirely. In the dialogue journals, the students can let out their feelings "in full bursts":

> "Feel so sad today," said one note by a second-grade Vietnamese girl. . . . "Cry, cry, cry. Feel so stupid. Please God let me go back to my country."

QUOTABLE QUOTES

On the Teacher as an Interactive Model:

I would like to suggest that what the teacher must be, to be an effective competence model, is a day-to-day working model with whom to interact. It is not so much that the teacher provides a model to imitate. Rather, it is that the teacher can become a part of the student's internal dialogue--somebody whose respect he wants, someone whose standards he wishes to make his own. It is like becoming a speaker of a language he shares with somebody. The language of that interaction becomes a part of oneself, and the standards and style that one adopts for that interaction become part of one's own standards.

Jerome Bruner, "The Will to Learn"
Toward a Theory of Instruction. (1966, p. 124)

A Student's View of the Importance of Dialogue Journals:

. . .I think writing these journals are very important and they play an essential role about connections between teacher and student. It's really nice to consider our teachers as our friends, it must be in this way, if not there is always a distance between them. If we know each other better, we will surely understand each other better too.

Farnaz, Age 18
High Intermediate ESL
Iran

A Poem

When I came here,
I found the white color in the outside.
I felt cold.
I didn't like the temperature.
Everyday I want to return to my country, so
I can't very happy.

Recently, the winter was gone,
I found the grass that was green,
And the flower was bloom.
Looking the outside like a picture,
It's very beautiful.
I changed my mind.
I wanted stay here,
And planned my summer semester.
Jean-Hsiou Lai, Taiwan
MCPS Adult Education ESOL

(This and other dialogue journal entries are printed with permission)

PLEASE HELP!!

To hold our costs down, we are paying directly for the costs of xeroxing and mailing the newsletter, which now run about $75 an issue. To keep accounts straight, PLEASE make your checks out to Jana Staton, rather than to "Dialogue" or the Center for Applied Linguistics. This avoids a separate bank account and its charges.

SPECIAL FEATURES IN OUR NEXT TWO ISSUES

Dialogue Journals at the University

A number of faculty at the University of Maryland have found creative uses for dialogue journals--in teacher education classes graduate courses, dissertation seminars, anc research projects. So that we can learn mor about these adaptations, we have asked Jessie Roderick to be our guest editor and organize other contributions on the subject for our next issue.

Dialogue Journals in Special Education

A very special interest to us and some of our readers has been the development of functional and meaningful literacy and self-expression among students who are not always considered "able" to read and write. A number of projects are in process, and at least one dissertation being written, on the uses of dialogue journals with students in special education and vocational rehabilitation classes, and with adults who are callec developmentally retarded. These will be pulled together into one issue.

DIALOGUE is the newsletter about the uses, benefits, and theory of dialogue journals, a practice of communicating in writing about topics of mutual interest through continuous, functional conversations between (usually) learners and teachers. This newsletter provides an informal means of sharing information, ideas and concerns among those who have begun using dialogue journals in the United States and in other countries. It is an outgrowth of the National Institute of Education research grant to describe and analyse the purposes, structure and benefits of dialogue journal communication (Analysis of Dialogue Journal Writing as a Communicative Event, Center for Applied Linguistics, 1982). For more information about research and practical applications, please write Jana Staton, c/o Center for Applied Linguistics, 3520 Prospect St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20007.

DIALOGUE appears approximately three times a year, at a cost of $3.00 to cover duplication and mailing. Make checks payable to Jana Staton.

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Dialogue

November, 1984

Editors: Jana Staton
Joy Kreeft
Shelley Gutstein

This issue presents a different facet of dialogue journal use--as a means of focused, reflective inquiry in higher education. Our guest editor, Dr. Jessie Roderick of the University of Maryland, assembled these accounts as a means of illuminating the role of a continuing personal dialogue in adult learning, with our students but also with each other. We hope that readers at the university level as well as those in other institutions will find these accounts instructive in pointing to the use of the dialogue journals for reflection and discernment in seeking truth.

Dialogue Journals in Higher Education

In his book *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action*, Donald Schon proposes that problems and solutions are found *in* practice through the process of *reflecting in* practice. Although Schon does not discuss dialogue journal writing as a *means of reflecting in* practice, it seems to me that many of us at the college level do reflect *in* as well as *on* practice when we dialogue with students or our colleagues. In a larger sense, dialogue journal writing appears to facilitate one's being a professional--an active inquirer into one's practice and a continuous learner and decisionmaker who functions in a social context. Is this a fair claim for the process of dialogue journal writing? Does it agree with your experience? We invite you to share in our enthusiasm and learnings as you read the accounts that follow.

The accounts include:

- the use of dialogue journals in helping student nurses assume responsibility for reflecting on and evaluating their decision regarding patient care.
- far-ranging discussions of two cultures in individual dialogues with visiting scholars from the People's Republic of China.
- dialogue journals used for feedback and sharing of perceptions and puzzlement, between colleagues.
- benefits and constraints of a structured dialogue journal discussing and reflecting on "play"--itself always a non-reflective experience!
- a reflective tool for understanding writing itself--especially with college students who are becoming conscious of their own skills and fears.

-- Jessie Roderick

Subscriptions

Our rate for 1 year (three issues) is $3.00, and thanks to those of you who have just subscribed, we're now running about even on costs. If you haven't sent us $3.00 during 1984, why not do so now. We'll forgive the past, and send you 3 issues in 1985! If you sent $3.00 this past year, consider yourself subscribed until Fall, 1985.

Be sure to make checks payable to Jana Staton, not to CAL or DIALOGUE.

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Approaching Clinical Teaching and Evaluation Through the Written Word

- Rose Jackson

Several faculty at Indiana University School of Nursing are using dialogue journals in an attempt to explore their potential for both formative and summative evaluation in a clinical setting. In the early stages of journal writing, our students are encouraged to share perceptions of the hospital experience. In turn, faculty respond in a supportive and nonthreatening manner. They also assist in making individualized patient care assignments, based on needs identified in the journals.

Encouraging students to ask questions they might not want to ask in front of peers, were not able to ask because of time constraints, or which seemed difficult and inappropriate in a patient's room are important components of the dialogue. As formal evaluation periods approach, faculty invite students to focus specifically on their achievement of objectives and on sharing perceptions of self in the role of a health professional. Faculty members also guide students toward comprehensive self-appraisal through the use of probing questions and analogous examples of their own experiences as students. In this way, students are steered toward assuming greater responsibility for judging the quality of their own client care. The process appears to support students' acquisition of a professional's sense of responsibility for independent monitoring of one's own practice.

- Rose Jackson, a professor in the Indiana University school of Nursing, prepares masters and doctoral level nursing students as teachers of nursing.

Dialoguing Across Cultures

- Jessie Roderick and Marsha Markman

For nearly two years, each of us participated in an individual written dialogue with a visiting scholar from the People's Republic of China. Both of our partners were among a group of Chinese computer science technologists and college professors enrolled in a computer science program at the University of Maryland. Since both Li and Tong expressed a desire to improve their written and spoken Englist during their stay in the United States, we arranged weekly, paired sessions in our respective offices for discussion and the exchange of dialogue journals.

Tong and Jessie

Dear Jessie,
Although I have been here for more than one year, I am not pleased with my English. when my friend told me that you would be interested in speaking with me I was very happy. Please correct any mistake that I made. I think I will get a lot of progress since your help. . .

Dear Tong,
. . .I must tell you that your English is very good. You write well with smooth flow and interesting vocabulary. . . In response to your request that I correct your writing, I've made some suggestions in your entry. For th most part, I've suggested alternatives for words you used. I will be happy to discuss these suggestions with you.

In this excerpt from his initial journal entry, Tong expressed a willingness to interact with me in order to get help in English. This husband and father of a six-year-old daughter, whose "hometown" is Shanghai, soon began writing me of "many interesting things" he found after he came to the United States. We talked of transportation, shopping, computers, tourism, education, seasons, personal travel experiences, museums, and other areas of mutual interest--comparing and contrasting the way of life in our two cultures. We also discussed word meanings, derivatives, and formal and informal writing and speaking. My desire to help Tong improve his English communication and my interest in learning more about persons from other cultures while learning more about myself in the process, motivated me to participate in this dialogue. In rereading our journal I sense more of a conversational tone than a teaching one, This suggests that for me, the learning about Tong and myself might

(Continued on p. 3)

have been a more powerful motivator than the desire to help him improve his English.

Li and Marsha

> *Dear Marsha,*
> *Since I came here, a lot of things I heard was made a deep impression on my mind. American young people have more independence than Chinese young people have. . .*
>
> *Dear Li,*
> *. . .The independence you see in American youngsters does have some unhappy consequences. Yes, there is a problem with drugs. . .the violence is there, too, but I don't see this as being the norm at all. . .*

An associate professor of computer science at a Chinese university, Li came to our tutoring sessions principally to improve his reading skills and at the same time, to enhance his knowledge and understanding of American life. Li designed his own curriculum, focused on a discussion of words, phrases, and concepts in articles he was reading initially in the University's student newspaper and later in articles from magazines, the daily newspapers, professional journals, short stories, essays, poetry, and comic strips.

Our weekly dialogue journal writing was introduced in order that Li might practice and develop his writing skills and his ability to think and communicate in English on paper. Language use and mechanics in his entries were not corrected, although he frequently recognized and corrected his own faulty grammar and spelling as a result of my own written responses.

Li wrote copiously--with humor and insight--borrowing from the richly poetic Chinese language. He commented on his visits to the theatre and museums, discussed a scholarly paper he presented (in English), and wrote about his work at the University and his family in China. His entries were replete with description, analysis, and social and philosophical commentary, providing me with a plethora of information and insight not only into Li and his culture, but into my own pedagogical beliefs and expectations.

* * * *

The interchanges we shared with each of our partners illustrate the fundamental commonalities between seemingly disparate peoples. They exemplify, too, the knowledge and understanding that can develop through dialogue and the insights into teaching and learning that such dialogue can produce.

Specifically, we learned that we shared with our Chinese dialogue partners many concerns, hopes, and appreciations. The desire for change that improves the quality of life for all was a persistent theme in our exchanges. We learned that our partners actively sought out ways to learn but did so in a gentle, caring manner. Their gratitude for our talking with them was evident in their choice of words--words that expressed thanks and an interest in us as persons. And we learned about ourselves as teachers, friends, and communicators. We raised many questions, generally answered their questions in order, and found ourselves comfortable in this one-on-one situation with a student-initiated curriculum.

- Jessie Roderick, a professor at the University of Maryland in Curriculum and Instruction, is concerned with the authentic person coming through in the teaching proces

College Professors Dialogue About Themselves

- Louise M. Berman

At the time I was trying to pull together my thoughts about the process of dialogue journal writing in which Jessie Roderick and I had engaged, as a way of exploring our roles as teachers, I read some articles in the Washington Post on the use of computers for monitoring the activities of employees in the workplace. As I thought about the similarities and dissimilarities between our experiences and the experiences of those described in the newspaper articles, I realized that computers monitoring the workplace and dialoguing about the workplace do share a common purpose. Both processes are informed by the hope that we may observe more concretely, we may understand more fully, and we may find better or at least different ways to do what we do. Both pro-

(Continued, p. 4)

cesses make objective one part of our experience, for further scrutiny--the computer details outward behavior, the dialogue journal highlights inner ideas, questions, and wonderments. Both processes allow for something to be done about what is scrutinized.

However, the differences are just as striking. The computer gives the information to a supervisor to do something to the worker. Dialogue journals are bases for sharing ideas among equals. Computer monitoring serves as a basis for judgments to be made about another person. Dialogue journaling serves as an avenue for supporting and for assisting each other in extending ideas.

Unlike computer monitoring which provides little basis for helping individuals become what they wish to be, dialogue journals provide the basis for exploring areas where thinking may be faltering and muddy. For example, we engaged in some dialogue about mystery, a few lines of which are shared.

Louise: *Perhaps we should allow some mystery for students and teachers. . .*

Jessie: *I like the idea of mystery but I'm not sure every teacher can handle it well. . .*

Louise: *. . .I am concerned that students are allowed to maintain some selfhood, some individuality, some mystery that may or may not be shared.*

This dialogue on mystery led us into some entries on alternatives to questioning. Our dialogue was not always sustained on a topic, but revisited on occasion or sometimes completely dropped if there did not seem to be reason to sustain it. Our interests and thoughts at the time of the entries determined the written conversations rather than predetermined specifications.

From our experience, we can offer some ideas and cautions for those considering dialoguing with colleagues about professional activities:

First, since we had engaged in a number of professional activities together, we had a sense of trust--very important if the journal entries are to be more than a surface dealing with issues. Second, as Jessie expressed, we gave ourselves opportunities to be rather than to be doing. Third, we could write in our journals on our own time and did not have to get out appointment books or plan "bag lunches" to carry out the activity. Fourth, our thinking was extended as we were lifted from the dailiness of our own activities. Fifth, we had access to a trusted colleague who helped us highlight that which we might like or not like about ourselves as professional beings.

The university professor frequently has little opportunity to engage in the kind of professional development which starts from the puzzlements of the individual professor. Dialoguing in a written conversation provides such an opportunity. It can break the aloneness in a profession which demand walking where others have not trod.

- Louise M. Berman is a professor of curriculum theory and development in the Department of Education Policy, Planning, and Administration, University of Maryland, College Park. She uses dialogue journals in her classes as a means of helping students reflect on their experiences in order to understand themselves more fully as professional persons.

Dialogue on Play

- Mary Rivkin

Play is a phenomenon observed and experienced by everyone. Yet it eludes precise definition and absolute identification. It is not always possible to tell if someone else is playing--even kindergarteners tell us that pleasure is no certain indication. It appears that only the players know if they are playing. But while scholars explore the mysteries and manifestations of the play phenomenon, people continue to play, most unreflectively.

I sought to increase reflectivity on play among teachers preparing to teach the supremely playful--young children. As part of one of their education courses, we experienced several potential play activities followed by their writing an experiential description of each activity, my responding to it, then they again to me. Class discussions also occurred.

I found that, while the activities generally proved sources of play, reflecting on play was not play for most

(Continued, p. 5)

students. Although many expressed enjoyment of the reflective process for its personal involvement, struggle over thought, self-exploration, and relationship with the teacher, others thought the play experience was dampened by the knowledge that reflection would be required subsequently. Some commented on the irony of studying play during a semester that was very demanding academically.

As well as learning about the students through dialogue, I learned about myself. My teacher's dream of "true conversation" with each student as Gadamer describes it, was sometimes realized and sometimes elusive. Some of my writing occurred simply to get to know a student, to discover her views. Other times we seemed to reach agreement, our views became valid and intelligible for each other. Sometimes I felt that I was making them write and myself too, because this was a class assignment. Along with the students, I found the compulsivity of our educational system militates against true I-Thou dialogue.

In rereading the dialogues, I also experienced what Gadamer calls "the otherness, and the indissoluble individuality of the other," (H.G. Gadamer, Truth and Method, 1970) both of the students and of myself. Each conversation was unique, each one seemed to me to be a stretching --for ideas, for words--an extending of horizons for both the student and myself. Surely changes occurred on both sides. Yet always gleaming through the words, the same persons, recognizable, characteristic. It gave me a new interpretation of Whitman's "I celebrate myself and sing myself."

- Mary Rivkin likes to teach, mother, read, and garden. She broods about the schools, and human happiness, perversity and potential. The experience reported here is part of her dissertation work at the University of Maryland-College Park.

NEXT ISSUE: Focus On Special Education

DIALOGUE's spring issue will discuss the uses of dialogue journals with mentally retarded students and others who typically don't become proficient in written communication. Teachers, including Leslee Reed, are finding dialogue journals to have many exciting benefits for such students.

Personalizing Composition Instruction Through Dialogue Journals

- Marsha C. Markman

For nearly three years, the dialogue journal has played an integral role in my college composition teaching.

In addition to the usual composition course fare--classroom writing activities, grading papers, individual conferencing--each of the students in my classes participates with me in a weekly written dialogue focusing on course assignments and activities, writing attitudes and concerns, and specific writing problems and strategies for their solution.

The dialogue journals are a way to personalize instruction in the composition curriculum. Central to such a "tutoring" approach is attention to writing apprehension, and to other personal and instructional issues which can affect writing performance but do not find their way to the classroom or the teacher's office. Our reflections in these personal dialogues are intended to help develop positive attitudes about writing and confidence in their ability to perform well.

Our dialogues (written outside the class) become vehicles for meeting course objectives and satisfying individual student needs, as the following example illustrates:

> *Dr. M.,*
>
> *I hate writing titles for my papers. I have no trouble writing the body of my papers, but I always delay writing the title until the last possible instant, and I'm never satisfied with it. Any suggestions?*
>
> *Gary,*
>
> *. . .A couple of suggestions for the title of paper:*
>
> *1) Ask yourself what the point of your paper is. What is the central idea you want to convey? The answer to that question will help lead to the "catchy" title you are looking for.*
>
> *2) Read through your paper keeping your search for a title in mind. Something you have written or a quote you have made may "jump off the paper" as an appropriate title.*

(Continued, p. 6)

The written dialogues do more than instruct and encourage. They enable students to practice writing to a real audience--a central element in writing, and one which eludes students and plauges composition teachers. Too, it permits students to individually work through--in writing--the planning, writing, and revising processes of composing. Each student can discuss specific writing attitudes, problems, and strategies, request help, and share successes and failures with an interested tutor, without the threat of correction and grading that accompanies most of their written course work. Indeed, my selective discussions in their dialogue journals about composing strengths and weaknesses have proved more likely to receive students' attention and promote response than my copious comments on a student's essay.

Along with personalized instruction, encouragement, and writing practice, the dialogue journal meets the goal of current composition research which encourages teachers to become active writers in the classroom as well as models of correct writing. The permanent and personal qualities of these interactions, furthermore, permit teachers to more closely monitor their students' needs and, hence, their composition curriculum. In this way, they can better satisfy the social and individual nature of classroom writing instruction.

- Marsha Markman has taught professional/technical writing at the University of Maryland. She is currently teaching composition at George Washington University and Holocaust literature and film at the University of Maryland.

Research Ideas: Using School Records

- Jana Staton

Most of us reading this newsletter are already convinced that dialogue journals are the best thing about our teaching and learning. But what do we say to administrators and parents? Analyzing journal texts can take years; a teacher in a local school hasn't the time or the resources to begin such analysis. But the changes recorded in the texts themselves--changes in self-concept, understanding of oneself and of others, or attitudes toward writing, learning English-- these changes are also going to be reflected in student behaviors. Such behaviors as school attendance, willingness to read and write, disciplinary referrals are being recorded in some way by schools already. We are convinced that information is readily available about the effects of dialogue journals on students from school records.

To start off, I have one candidate outcome measure: re-enrollment in subsequent English language classes. At Gallaudet College, I found that preparatory college students (all deaf) in the developmental English Language Program who were in dialogue journal classes for one or more semesters were significantly more likely to re-enroll for a another semester of English than were students who were not involved in this kind of personal written communication with their teacher. My interpretation of this "persistence effect" is that involvement in systematic dialogue journal use increased the students' sense of affiliation with the instructor and changed their attitudes and expectations about studying English. More of them were willing to re-enroll after failing the test for admission to regular English classes. Before you say "that's obvious", remember how administrators react to anything which keep students enrolled.

Mrs. Reed has always pointed out that her students are seldom absent, seldom late for school, and that she has few disciplinary referrals. You may think of other measures we haven't. We think these kinds of outcomes are well worth our looking at as a way of documenting the tangible benefits of interpersonal dialogues. We'd like to hear from anyone who's collecting such data.

Notes From the Field

Sara Sill writes about using dialogue journals with her fourth grade students, mostly from Spanish-speaking homes, at Alexandria Avenue School in Los Angeles:

"In the journal I can discover the individual characteristics of each child and quickly break down the student-teacher barrier. We become interested in each

(Continued, p. 7)

other and this carries over into all of our classroom activities, so that even if one of us is angry, we know that we still care about each other.

"I find that when parents come in for parent-teacher conferences, I know their child very well and we have a lot to talk about, because I have developed a special relationship with each child. The parents are delighted to know that a teacher cares enough to respond individually to their child."

Hilary Stern, Director of the Adult Education Program at the Spanish Education Development Center in Washington, D.C., describes her first experience using dialogue journals with an adult class:

"It's been two weeks now of writing to twenty-three students a day, and I am an enthusiastic convert!

"My primary objective (in using the dialogue journals)-- helping my students feel comfortable writing in English--has now become secondary. I have developed a personal relationship with each and every one of my students (a feat in itself, but even more remarkable considering classes have only been in session for two weeks and will continue for only two more weeks). Besides the personal satisfaction of developing new relationships, other unexpected benefits have arisen. Discipline, the most salient problem in public schools, is no longer a concern...I have these kids in the palm of my hand. I have been able to help some students resolve academic and personal problems which, in the flurry of the classroom, I would have never had time to find out about, let alone discuss. And I have been able to set aside two hours every day to indulge in one of my favorite activities: writing."

From Jeff Creswell, a fifth grade teacher, Humboldt School, in Portland Oregon, comes this commentary:

"Every child knew that he/she had a private, alone time with me every day because of the journals. Every morning they scrambled to their journals to see what I had written. This intimacy played an important role in classroom management. Many problems were worked out through dialogue in the journals.

"Listening is essential to good journaling. I tried to really listen to what the children were saying in their writing and to respond accordingly. If I misunderstood, they let me know it! If they misunderstood what I had written I let them know it!

"Children's sensitivity to print increased. By the end of the year they were far more aware of punctuation, spelling,... Writing was clearly viewed as a powerful tool of communication. The mechanics of writing became important because they helped to get the meaning across."

From Donna McBride, a fourth grade teacher at Humboldt and Jeff's partner in trying out the dialogue journals last year:

"The journals were by far the best thing that happened during the school year. I feel the journals allowed the students to express themselves and carry on personal conversations with me. I got to know them as individuals and they learned a lot about me. A lot of discipline problems were handled through the dialogue. Journals were one area where a student could succeed no matter what his or her level."

Thanks for sending these comments along to Dr. Colin Dunkeld, Portland State University, who is growing his own Dialogue Journal Project out there in Oregon. A report of the project in one school is now available through ERIC:

Dunkeld, Colin and Anderson, Sandra. The Robert Gray Journal Project: An Account of a Year-Long Journal-writing Activity in Grades Five Through Eight. ED 240 592

Ordering DIALOGUE JOURNALS

Here is the best source we've found for ordering a special supply of dialogue journals. For a minimum order of 1000 copies, Roaring Spring Blank Book Company will provide saddlestitched, lined composition books, about 7 x 8½ inches. The

(Continued, p. 8)

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

cover is plain, lightweight tagboard, with lines printed for student and teacher names and the words (---school name----) DIALOGUE JOURNAL on the front. The price is right--about 50¢ apiece. Teachers at Gallaudet College have been using these for two years, years, and particularly like the light-weight covers which don't say "Composition". The cover is great for student decorative instincts.

Roaring Spring Blank Book Company
740 Sparry Street
Roaring Spring, PA 16673

PH: (814) 224-5141
Ask for Hunter Swope, Mark Garach, or Dan Hoover, and mention that you are interested in the same kind of journal as Gallaudet College uses.

Maybe if enough of us write or call, they might decide to make this a stock item (without the school name) so that smaller orders could be placed.

Leslee's Page

In August, I spent two weeks starting out a new class for the teacher I had last year as a student teacher, because she couldn't begin teaching until the middle of August. Because she will have so much else to do this first year, I did not start the dialogue journals with her class, and it really made a big difference. I repeated the same lessons, standards, everything, but the genuine enthusiasm on the part of the students just was not there! Even my student teacher (who had seen my class begin the year before) noticed the difference. Dialogue journals do cause students to become much more personally involved with the class and with the teacher, which just does a great deal for the interest level.

-- Leslee Reed

Note: Mrs. Reed's experience points out the importance of beginning the year with dialogue journals. They may seem to be an overload when you're just getting started, but they help create the kind of classroom which makes teaching a joy.

DIALOGUE is the newsletter about the uses, benefits, and theory of dialogue journals, a practice of communicating in writing about topics of mutual interest through continuous, functional conversations between (usually) learners and teachers. This newsletter provides an informal means of sharing information, ideas and concerns among those who have begun using dialogue journals in the United States and in other countries. It is an outgrowth of a National Institute of Education research grant to describe and analyze the purposes, structure and benefits of dialogue journal communication (Analysis of Dialogue Journal Writing as a Communicative Event, Center for Applied Linguistics, 1982). For more information about research and practical applications, please write Jana Staton, c/o Center for Applied Linguistics, 3520 Prospect St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20007.

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Dialogue

May, 1985

Editors: Jana Staton
Joy Kreeft Peyton
Shelley Gutstein

This issue focuses on the use of dialogue journals with two groups of students with special educational needs—educationally mentally retarded or handicapped students, and learning disabled students. This focus does not cover the full range of students with special needs, which would include deaf, non-literate, and emotionally disturbed students among others, but it gives us a good beginning look at how dialogue journals are being used in the broad area of special education.

Our guest editor for this issue is Roberta Steinberg, who teaches learning disabled high school students (freshmen and juniors) at J.E.B. Stuart High School in Fairfax County.

Dialogue Journals with Students with Special Needs

This issue grew out of exciting reports we have received of dialogue journal use with students with special needs, especially those with some temporary or permanent limits in cognitive functioning. Particularly, we have been concerned with the value of literacy for students with special needs. Society has traditionally had little expectation that reading and writing for such students can ever be very meaningful or useful in later adacemic work or even on the job. Where teachers have in the past been affected by these expectations, few opportunities for written language use have been made available to the students.

Writing for the retarded student may mean being asked to copy sentences, but never being allowed to write anything independently because of the numerous mistakes in form that often result. Writing therefore soon becomes a mechanical rather than a cognitively engaging activity. For the learning disabled student, writing may be seen as a means of "self-expression," but the content of that expression may not be responded to by the teacher in a meaningful way. Some learning disabled students may not write at all because they are blocked by a blank page, and they need highly structured guidance or "bridges" to get them started. Many teachers have been searching for ways to provide such bridges for these students, rather than simply interpreting their difficulties as conclusive signs of permanent impairment.

What does an interactive, written dialogue with a teacher have to offer such students?

1) It provides opportunities to actually participate successfully in communicating by writing and reading.

2) It provides a means whereby the student can move through developmental steps to self-expression, at first perhaps writing with a great deal of help and later with less assistance.

3) It puts the student in touch with the teacher's mind, with the teacher's ways of perceiving and labeling experiences and events which they both share or know about.

4) It provides the teacher with a means of assessing each student's potential for development, because the dialogues occur in the student's "zone of proximal development."

Written language is a tool of the mind—an "amplifier" if you will—of the mind's capacity to record and remember experiences and information, to organize and rearrange them, and to make connections between what one thinks and feels and what others think and feel. Perhaps students whose minds don't work as quickly or in the same way as ours need writing even more, to aid and amplify and provide feedback on what they are thinking and want to say to the world.

For the teacher, the rewards are even more immediately forthcoming, and the excitement of teachers about what they learn from their dialogues is apparent throughout this issue. If we take seriously Vygotsky's injunction that what the child can do today with assistance she or he can do tomorrow unaided, then the dialogue journal interactions are a glimpse each day of the student's unfolding potential. Teachers see in the dialogue mental and linguistic capabilities which the student cannot yet demonstrate or use unassisted. The dialogue journals provide one way of assessing the potential of the student for development, and at the same time a means of directly helping the student to internalize the strategies needed for more independent functioning in reading and writing and in classroom activities.

We have as yet no clear understanding of the true effects of extended participation in these written dialogues for stimulating further mental, linguistic, and emotional growth for students with special needs. These articles do suggest, however, that students with limitations in oral modes of communication need full access to written language used for communicative purposes, just as do all students. The apparently greater difficulty that many special needs students have with written language (in contrast to speech) may occur because written language has not been introduced to them as a functional means of communication, but only as a product to be evaluated.

Workshop Handouts

Our estimate is that about 90% of the 500 people who get this newsletter (and probably a lot of others we don't know) are giving workshops about dialogue journals. Would some of you be willing to share a copy of your handouts with others? We're thinking of two kinds of one-page handouts which might exist: handouts you have used in teacher workshops focused on using dialogue journals with particular populations, and handouts you have given to your students to explain dialogue journals. We have two or three already (for elementary school teachers; college freshmen; and ESL teaching, adult level). If we get a good sample, we'll make the set available at cost. If you send something in, make sure you give yourself full credit: Name, address, even phone number should be right on the handout.

Topics in the Dialogue Journals of Mildly Retarded Students

- Jack W. Farley, Jr.

Researchers who have studied the written language performance of mildly retarded students through composition production and written story recall have observed poorly developed abilities in the areas of syntax and spelling (Cartwright, 1968). Previous research has indicated that mildly retarded writers perform significantly lower in the mechanics of writing than nonretarded writers with the same mental ages, and that writing abilities of the mildly retarded are comparatively less well developed than their speaking, listening, or reading abilities (Sedlak & Cartwright, 1972; Durrell & Sullivan, 1958).

Having studied the written language performance of mildly retarded writers who have maintained dialogue journals with me, I have also found limitations in written syntax, spelling, and punctuation. However, regardless of the limitations that can be observed in writing produced by the mildly retarded, analysis of their communication in dialogue journals suggests an alternative view of their written language performance.

I have found that the topics which mildly retarded writers discuss in their dialogue journals do not necessarily reflect their mental ages, but rather their chronological ages. A group of six mildly retarded students (average mental age, 10.0 years; average chronological age, 18.1 years) with whom I maintained dialogue journals actively discussed their experiences of driving, employment, graduation planning, marriage planning, and imminent parenthood. For example, here is an entry by one of my male students.

> *Some persons are nice and other person like to do things like to sing, play the radio, go to the moive. Some person don't like to work in ther house and some are very good for working on a job or some . . . peoples like to have things like money, new car, house, and some people like to read and some don't*

like to read a books. I sowetime like to read a book but I like to put think to gathir and I like working with my hand and I like to play on a football team.

These students consistently produced functionally relevant (though far from mechanically accurate) interactive communication. They reported opinions and personal facts, made predictions, responded to questions, and evaluated. From reviewing the students' communication, it became apparent that average intellect is not a prerequisite for driving, working, graduating, marrying, parenting, or maintaining dialogue journals.

****

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Cartwright, G. 1968. Written language abilities of educable mentally retarded and normal children. American Journal of Mental Deficiency. 72. 499-505.

Durrell, D. & Sullivan, H. 1958. Language achievements of mentally retarded children. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. 206 147).

Sedlak, R. & Cartwright, G. 1972. Written language abilities of EMR and nonretarded children with the same mental ages. American Journal of Mental Deficiency. 77. 95-99.

Now Available

Dialogue Writing: Analysis of Student-Teacher Interactive Writing in the Learning of English as a Second Language

By Joy Kreeft, Roger W. Shuy, Jana Staton, Leslee Reed, and Robby Morroy

This first study of dialogue journal writing with beginning ESL students includes samples of student writing and illustration of the progress made by each student in the journal during the year, discussion by Leslee Reed of her use of dialogue journals as a classroom management tool, and research examining interaction patterns, teacher strategies, and features of the language input the students receive in the journals, use of language functions, and acquisition of English morphology.

For a copy send $30 (to cover copying, postage and handling) to:
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3520 Prospect Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20007
Attn: Publications Coordinator

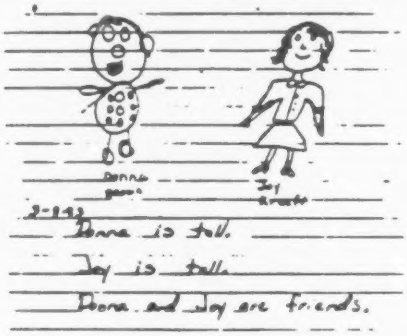
"I CAN Write!" Written Interactions of Mentally Handicapped Students

- Joy Kreeft Peyton and Roberta R. Steinberg

We began dialogue journal writing in our Sunday School class for mentally handicapped adults as a way to enhance and further develop the personal relationship we already had with each student. The students range from severely to mildly mentally handicapped. Our class is small, and we frequently have as many teachers as students—an ideal setting for dialogue journal writing. We describe here our experience with two of the students.

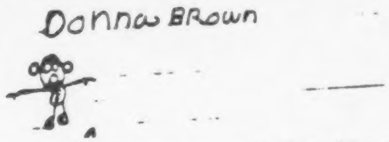
Donna[1]

Donna is 37 years old, and considered severely mentally handicapped. She is a fluent and interesting conversationalist, but besides writing her name, when we began the class she had done no reading or writing since she was 10-12 years old and had a tutor. She is considered a "non-writer." When I asked her if she would like to keep a dialogue journal with me, she said that she couldn't write. So I told her that we could tell each other things with pictures, and if we wanted to add words, we could. She said yes, she wanted to do that. Here is her first entry and my response. She could read our names, and I read the rest of my entry to her.

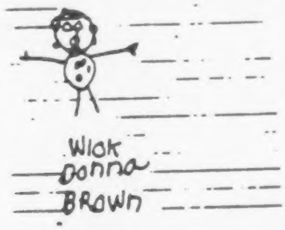


Donna is tall.
Joy is tall.
Donna and Joy are friends.

A week later her entry looked the same. When I said, "Oh, you drew yourself again," she replied, "I'm telling you that my hand is healed" (she had burned her hand earlier." And indeed, some fingers had been added in this week's picture. It was clear that she understood we were sending messages to each other.



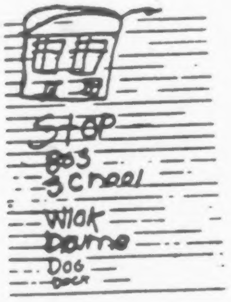
Donna's third entry contains the word "walk." When we looked at it together,



she said, "I'm telling you that I walk by my house." Donna had, without my bidding, broken into print. I imagine that the act of putting words and pictures on paper had called up for her words she had learned to write with her tutor, years ago. The next three entries were the same, a picture and the words "Wlok Donna Brown," and I wondered if we had gone as far as we could. But as we discussed my responses, I discovered that she could read most of my words without help. Again, she was digging back into her past experience with reading and writing. One day she wrote the following, and told me that she takes the bus to work (the word she knew how to write was "school").

Wlok Stop Bos have Houelike
SChool

One day she wrote:



and explained that she was telling me about the black dog that she sees every day. The picture had changed to a house. As we continued to write back and forth, week after week, new words would appear among the old ones that she used over and over.

Donna and I have been writing weekly in a dialogue journal for two years now. The changes I have shown here have taken place over long periods of time. Now I often ask her what she wants to say and help her spell it. A recent entry was:

I heveaNewdRess
ITSblue

"I have a new dress.
It's blue."

As we continue our journal, it is clear to me that we have developed a valuable way of sharing messages with each other. Since we're in a class with other students, our journal writing time is sometimes the only time we have to talk individually with each other. We also have a very important reading and writing event. I think it's the only time that Donna reads and writes all week.

---

[1] Because Donna's name is an important part of her entries, it is impossible to use a pseudonymn. Both Donna and her parents have given permission for her real name to be used.

****

Mary

Since the focus of our Sunday School class is to learn the scriptures and to develop an understanding of God, the dialogue journal gives us a chance to relate on a more personal level, developing an understanding of each other—our interests, fears, and innermost workings! Mary heartily enjoys writing in her journal. Aside from occasional help with spelling, she has shared with me a variety of topics, including school, her boyfriend, books she has read, movies she has seen, her family, and her upcoming Baptism. I am continually surprised that Mary doesn't feel inhibited in the slightest about writing and expressing her thoughts. She is eager to write and to share things about herself. The more journal writing we do, the longer she needs to write; not because it is a difficult task for her, but because she has so much she wants to write about. And judging the quality of Mary's entries from the point of view of grammar and syntax, it appears that the journal is gradually improving her ability to express herself in writing.

Can Dialogue Journals be of Value with Learning Disabled High School Students?

Roberta R. Steinberg

When I started using dialogue journals, it was with a class of learning disabled students at the elementary level. The experience was successful and gratifying for all of us. It took us a while to get started and establish a routine, but once we got going we wrote twice weekly. The range of topics we wrote about included personal experiences they wanted to share and concerns they had about being learning disabled. They had many, many questions—about what I did outside of school, what hobbies we might have in common, how they were doing in school, and what they might do in the future.

This fall, when I began teaching learning disabled high school students, I was faced with a completely new challenge. Would L. D. high school students freely use dialogue journal writing as a creative tool for self-expression as my elementary children had? When I first introduced the idea to the class, it was met with a great deal of hesitation. I explained that we would be keeping an ongoing journal together, and that I would be writing thoughts and sharing ideas with them each time they wrote an entry to me. In other words, we would have a written conversation. They weren't sure what to expect! At first I let them write freely twice a week, and gave them no specific topic to write about. Two of my six students felt comfortable writing without prompting, and had no problems. However, I found that four of the students had difficulty writing anything. Sure, they had a lot to say, but they didn't know where to begin. They needed much more structure than the "free writing" was providing them. With this in mind, I began suggesting topics, or giving them key words they could write about, or questions about themselves, the world, society, etc., to which they could respond—for example, "How do you feel about nuclear war?" "What do you want to do after you finish school?" "What are some of the goals you have set for yourself?" All they needed was the start, a beginning or an idea which they could then expand on.

The results thus far have been very interesting. One student, who has an identity problem and frequently expresses his dislike for English class, is a case in point. Needing to be the class clown and express his dislike for our class has frequently gotten this student into trouble. Yet we have been able to establish a beautiful relationship outside of "academics" in our dialogue journal. The journal has provided an outlet for this child to express his feelings—feelings he has about being learning disabled and questions he needs answered like, "Will I always be this way?" Being adopted, this child feels as if he is different from the others and is unsure about who he is and where he came from. Peer pressure and dating, values clarification, interpersonal relationships, and family problems have all been areas that we have shared in our journal writing.

This relationship is what has been so fascinating to me—to have a child who is so unmotivated and at times disruptive in class, yet so caring, sensitive and sharing in his journal. The beauty of dialogue journals is that they enable the teacher to establish an intimate relationship with the student through writing; a relationship that is ordinarily impossible because of the need to teach the entire class. Unfortunately, during class time we teachers aren't always able to really get to know our students on a more personal level, and dialogue journal writing allows us to do that. In the case of the student mentioned above, it allowed me to answer questions and provide support where it was dearly needed. To give you an example of the kinds of things we might write about, here is an exchange between me and another student in the class (printed here with her permission).

Student: *Tonight Im going to the football game with my sister. I think the months are going by fast. The job I applied for is Bradlees but I don't know if Im going to get it. My mother gave me another application. The job is to clean the building in Vienna. I did the job before because I use to help my mother and my grandmother clean the building so I hope I get the job because I think it's time for me to have money of my own so I don't have to ask my mother for any.*

Teacher: *The time is going by quickly. When I was a senior in high school, I got a job at a department store over the Christmas holidays. I felt good earning money to be able to buy things without having to ask my parents for money. I worked hard. There was a show on T.V. last night called "Family Ties." The young girl in the show got a part time job while she continued to go to school. She told her mom that working at the store made her feel good about herself. It was a good program.*

I think it's nice and very responsible of you to want to do that. Just be careful that your grades don't slip, and that you do a job that you like.

I feel that several factors contribute to the current success of my dialogue journal program: (1) the small class size. This enables us to work more closely together and possibly to do more with our journal writing than a larger class could. (2) a structured time to write. Learning disabled students greatly benefit from consistency and structure. The routine that allows them to know in advance that Mon., Wed., and Fri. are journal writing days makes it easier for them to organize and prepare themselves and enhances their writing. (3) knowledge of my students' strengths and limitations. This should be the first item to consider when setting up a dialogue journal program. Those students who can write independently without needing "dialogue starters" should be encouraged to write freely. But with many of my learning disabled students, to avoid frustration and wasted writing time, I needed to give them an idea, raise a question, etc. Giving them something to write about and at the same time personalizing it gives them enthusiasm and confidence to write. (4) choice of a journal. I have some students who write rather large, and I needed to decide whether to use a large, notebook-size pad for journals or a small spiral pad. I chose a small spiral pad because it was pocket size and seemed more personal. The children liked the idea of a smaller pad, because it enabled them to put it in their pocket or read it without its being so easily seen by others. Interestingly enough, students who wrote large began to write noticeably smaller and more legibly, and they didn't feel inhibited by the amount of writing space either.

Getting Started With Learning Disabled Deaf Students

- Linda Mondschein

My class consists of 5 boys between the ages of 6 and 9, with hearing losses ranging from mild to profound. Four of the five boys have severe learning problems and an accompanying lack of confidence in their academic abilities, so they are now in a "special class" at Kendall Demonstration Elementary School on the Gallaudet campus.

Dialogue journals complement my natural language approach to reading and writing and have become an integral part of our daily morning routine. I have found them to be a valuable tool for monitoring progress and encouraging the children to take more risks when communicating in writing. By having the right to choose the topics for discussion, the children have gained a sense of ownership over their own work and value it highly.

Two of my children (David and Wayne) are not functional readers and still primarily use pictures to communicate in their journals. In September, Wayne would draw large blobs with pen or crayon but add no print to his entries. Now, after

six months, and after I have asked my students to use only pencil, Wayne is drawing pictures of his friends and his environment and is writing the name "Michael Jackson," names of his classmates, and words he sees on signs around the room. Up to this time David and Wayne haven't responded to my remarks in their journals, but I continue to provide exposure to meaningful writing by writing one or two sentences under their pictures, which I read together with them (by signing) each morning.

The growth in communication and in confidence for my other three students has been very distinct and exciting. One student, Lenny, who is a bright 6-year-old, has moved from listing an inventory of the letters he knew down the margin of the page and filling in the remainder with large pictures, to writing about his family, friends, special holidays, and feelings. Lenny also incorporates into his entries the comments which I have written on his homework papers, such as "WOW" and "Good work." In March, Lenny expressed his opinion of himself and his sister:

Carolyn yes ✱ Good
Lenny yes ✱ Good

Lenny takes a long time to write and really ponders over what he wants to discuss in our journal each day. I have seen his ability to comprehend what I write and to communicate effectively in writing greatly improve, even though he is not yet responding in writing to what I write.

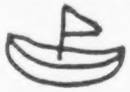
Andrew used mostly invented spelling when we began the dialogue—so inventive that he was unable to reread his entries or my responses without assistance. Recently, while looking back through his journal, Andrew asked me what some of his early conversations said. Since his were not intelligible, we had to reread my responses to understand his remarks. Then we looked at some of his most recent entries:

I love you Linde
Your car is nice

I frad of witch
I frad of rocks

Anthony's delight was obvious as he realized he could read and understand them easily.

Erin illustrates another language and communication breakthrough which the dialogue journals facilitated. At 9 years, this student has a very low frustration/tolerance level and becomes upset easily. Erin did not want to be involved with the journals in any way. He would become upset and cry when the time came to write to me or to read my responses. Our struggle produced basically the same kind of entry each day. Erin would draw a picture and add a one-word label, such as this:



boat

He would never respond to my comments about his entry or write about the same topic twice. He would frequently draw intricate satellites and rockets, but he refused to discuss them in writing.

In November, Erin began drawing pictures in sequenced steps to illustrate the crafts projects he chose to construct, then returned to drawing arbitrary pictures and adding one-word labels. I continued to write, question, and encourage him to write to me, but a dialogue between us did not ensue.

Finally, after Christmas I became frustrated with this one-way communication and stopped responding! The next morning Erin approached me with a bewildered expression on his face, and pointed to the blank page where my response should have been. I told him (in sign language) that since he was not writing and sharing with me, I did not want to write to him. He went back to his desk immediately, and that day his entry read:

color see March bike Happe to you.

What a success! Erin was referring to his birthday (in March) and to a red bike he hoped to receive. I wrote:

You want a red bike for your
birthday. Your birthday is on
March 3. We will sing "Happy
Birthday" to you.

The next day Erin wrote:

the Happy Birthday to you, March 3,
cupcakes give Lenny, Andrew, and
David and Wayne, Linda.

Of course you can imagine how eagerly I responded to this very informative comment! Two days later I read:

> *The dance is on Thursday. Erin late for my OK*

Are dialogue journals worth it? You bet!

However, my students do not always make steady progress. It is now the middle of March, and today Erin's dialogue has regressed back to a picture and one-word label. Today I will write the date and respond with only a sad face. I hope we will soon begin conversing again.

The older children in my class, Andrew and Erin, want more privacy now when they write. For the younger children, privacy is not an issue yet. Wayne and Lenny have begun teasing each other in their journals. One draws a picture of the other and writes "sad" or "crying" underneath. Then they giggle about their joke, and I know that they are really reading. Their interactions point out a final benefit of the dialogue journals which I really didn't expect. All of the children have increased their interactions and sharing with each other, both in their journals and throughout the day in face-to-face communication. What a positive learning experience we're all having!

NEXT ISSUE: Dialogue as Reading

One of the neglected aspects of dialogue journal communication is that it is also a reading event. Our fall, 1985 issue will focus on how the dialogue journals work as a reading event for students, and how they might also be used as an informal reading inventory to assess students' reading ability. CONTRIBUTIONS FROM ALL OF YOU ARE WELCOME! If you have been thinking about the reading side of dialogue journals, your comments, observations, research articles are needed. Send to Jana Staton at CAL.

Dialogue Journals for Mainstreaming Educationally Handicapped Students

- Leslee Reed

It happens to every teacher at some time. "We know you are sensitive to the needs of individuals and you've done such wonderful things with some of our youngsters who have had problems." (Now you brace yourself, here it comes!) "Annie is being sent to our school. She's a dear little girl, and I'm sure you can help her a lot." (But, you think I already have a class full of students who each, in some way, need special help.) As usual, you smile and reply, "I'll try."

Annie arrives, sweet, eager and handicapped by spinal bifida. She has been in a special school for children with physical and educational handicaps. It is felt that now she is ready for mainstreaming. Through repeated surgeries and special shoes she is able to run, play and carry on normal activities with only a limp. Annie smiles, she loves people, and immediately is absorbed into the activities of the class, classified as a fifth grader. But adjusting to a new class and a totally different learning environment is not easy. Getting along with 28 to 30 other students is a far cry from the 6 or 8 who were in her previous class. Annie knows the alphabet. That is, she can sing it, but she doesn't recognize the letters when she sees them. Her reading skills are minimal, and she is easily discouraged. I need to start at a basic level with her without letting the other students in the class think she is "dumb."

When I received Annie's school records, her folder was filled with pages of immature scrawls, pictures, and worksheets consisting of lines connecting words and pictures. There was no evidence of ability to read and write. Her I.Q. score was vague. 23 had been written, along with a comment that the testing had been unsatisfactory. The greatest help her records gave was that she had a sunny disposition. The specialists felt she would probably not be able to work at the 5th grade level, now or probably ever. They were willing to try whatever I asked them to do. There was discussion of placing her in a lower grade. Academically that might have helped, but socially it would have been destructive to her, in my judgment.

Every teacher who has had to make such an "adjustment" knows the extra hours of work and worry that it entails. It is obvious to the other children that the new student is different. Attention span is shorter, and the need for help, support and supervision is almost constant. To help in the adjustment the teacher must create a warm climate of acceptance so that others in the class do not resent the time spent with this one student who is used to having so much help. In these situations, the Dialogue Journal has served me very well.

Everyone in my class has a Dialogue Journal, so immediately the new student is helped to begin her own. (Every student writes at least three sentences in his journal every day and places it in a special place for my reply each night. What we write is private, and the writing is never graded.) Frequently the new student needs help to begin writing, and another student, an aide, or I find a few minutes to establish the practice, set up the pattern and encourage the student to write without worry about spelling, grammar or of being graded. As the new student realizes that everyone else is doing it, she feels more at ease. Here is one activity where she is the same as everyone else. There is no need to worry about competing, being criticized, or being told it is right or wrong. Very soon this becomes for each student and for me an important tool in communication. Here they may tattle, complain, ask questions, and know that they are being "heard" every time they write in their journal. My responses assure them that their feelings and problems are known and shared. Students learn that they are important. With continued use they learn that I can be trusted and am responsive to whatever is on their minds.

Annie loved the idea of having a journal. Pencil in hand she was poised to write—but what? On a slip of paper I printed, "My name is Annie Brown. I am in Room 11. I am in grade 5." I read it to her and had her read it back to me. We talked about her name, her room, and her grade. We found the words that said her name, her grade and her room. She read the 3 sentences again, delighted that she was reading, and smiling happily the whole time. Now she could write in her journal.

On the next day when she got her journal back we read the words, and her face again lit up in smiles. All eagerness she sat down, and pencil in hand wrote exactly what she had written the first day. So I introduced her to the date which is always on the front of the chalkboard, and showed her how we start each entry with the date, then we write something different each day--something that we want to tell each other, or questions we want to ask. On a slip of paper I wrote, "My name is Annie. I live at 354 3rd Street. My telephone number is ___. She didn't know her telephone number, they had just had a telephone put in. So we amended her writing to say, "Today I will learn my telephone number."

Annie's education had begun. She is now reading and writing those things which in my judgment are vital to survival. With the help of another student or an aide she dictates her ideas and then reads them back. Writing back to her I keep the sentences and ideas simple, yet appropriate to her needs and to her writing. She tries to read what is written to her, and may either ask someone for help or come to me personally and ask what was written. Though she is unable to keep up with the other fifth graders, she has her journal and uses it to express her feelings when the lesson is so beyond her that she feels helpless. It does not label her as being slow or behind. We all write in our journals whenever we feel we have something which must be said, so the class accepts her behavior without question. The daily exchange becomes fun as we discuss ideas and problems she has. As she becomes more adept at comprehending, she can be encouraged to think about how the problem developed and be given a choice of ways of solving it. Underlying all of these emotional and social adjustments is an ongoing basic reading and writing activity.

After the first year, Annie's gains surprised everyone. With her permission, I shared her journal with the specialists who worked with her. It showed clearly that she was gaining and comprehending. They were delighted, and felt that for the first time she was really making progress academically. No, she was not at grade level, but she was certainly gaining, and though additional surgery kept her out of school for six weeks, she was gradually becoming independent and approaching the level expected of her age. Here is an entry from her journal near the end of the year:

> *I miss you too. Why didn't you come yesterday? Today is warm. I can't believe that a 1st grader can read in the 9th level. She is so small. I bet she is going to be smart when she grow up. I love plants. Thank you for the plants.*

Through the entire year the journal was a basic tool. At times she wrote pages to me telling me about an event or describing why something was good or bad. Sometimes she wrote only about the weather, simply fulfilling the basic 3-sentence requirement. At the year-end evaluation we agreed not to retain her in the fifth grade, and my request to keep her in my classroom for her sixth grade year was granted. Her adjustment to a regular school and an academic gain of two to three years indicated that mainstreaming had really been effective. As far as I could tell, the Dialogue Journal had been the tool that effected the major change.

Recent Dialogue Journal Publications

Gambrell, Linda B. Dialogue journals: Reading-writing interaction. The Reading Teacher. February, 1985. 512-515.

Shuy, Roger W. Language as a foundation for education: The school context. Theory into Practice. Summer, 1984. 167-174.

Staton, Jana. Engaging deaf students in thinking, reading, and writing: Dialogue journal use at Gallaudet. Volta Review, Special issue on writing. September, 1985.

BACK ISSUES - A little History of Dialogue Journals

We've had a lot of requests to make the back issues of this newsletter available, so we will. There have been eight issues since 1982, with the following focuses:

I.1 - General news (April, 1982)
I.2 - Benefits to the teacher (Fall, 1982
I.3 - Benefits from the students' view (April, 1983)
I.4 - Research issue (August, 1983)
II.1 - What is dialogue? Different models (January, 1984)
II.2 - Interpersonal uses (July, 1984)
II.3 - Dialogue journals in higher education (December, 1984)
II.4 - Dialogue journals with students with special needs (May, 1985)

Separate issues are not available, but the entire set (about 60 pages) has been reproduced, along with:

- a list of publications related to dialogue journals
- abstracts of all dialogue journal dissertations we know about (see list below)
- a brief chronological history of the dialogue journal research

This is all for $5.00 (our cost to duplicate and mail out). Send orders to Jana Staton, c/o Center for Applied Linguistics, and make checks payable to HANDBOOK PRESS.

These are the dissertation abstracts available so far:

Young Writers in Search of an Audience. Deborah Jaffer Braig. University of Pennsylvania. May, 1984.

A Descriptive Analysis of the Journal Writing Abilities of a Group of Educable Mentally Retarded Young Adults. Jack W. Farley, Jr. University of Cincinnati. 1985

Dialogue Journals and the Acquisition of Grammatical Morphology in English as a Second Language. Joy E. Kreeft. Georgetown University. December, 1984.

Back issues, cont. from p. 10

Teacher-Student Dialogue Writing in a College Composition Course: Effects Upon Writing Performance and Attitudes. Marsha Markman. University of Maryland. December, 1983.

Acquiring Practical Reasoning Through Teacher-Student Interaction in Dialogue Journals. Jana Staton. UCLA Graduate School of Education. June, 1984.

Notes From the Field

Several of you have written us wonderful responses to our previous issues. Here are some comments we've received.

* * *

I just finished team teaching a course at the University of Maryland on the Holocaust in Literature and Film. I introduced the dialogue journal, and it was a marvelous addition to the course. My colleague and I plan to write an article about this experience.

Marsha Markman
University of Maryland

* * *

I'm busily working with colleagues in our undergraduate programs who are using the dialogue journal with their students in clinical settings ("Dialogue," 11/84). At this point I'm busily trying to analyze the journals and preparing a paper for presentation at a nursing conference in April. The kinds of interactions I'm seeing between faculty and students are wide ranging--not so much focused on evaluation, but rather on "self in the process of becoming."

Rose Jackson
University of Maryland

* * *

Although I had used journals before, I had never participated in a long-term dialogue journal with students. I began using the journals in three of my high school literature classes. I dialogued once a week with almost 90 students for about 10 weeks. I am not sure how I did it in addition to all my other work, but I did it and enjoyed it. My greatest insight from that experience was to discover that I had found an invaluable way to personalize instruction.

Last spring I dialogued with seniors in an Advanced Placement Composition and Literature class. I am doing it again this year. I hope to examine these journals for my doctoral work at the University of Maryland to see if they reveal if and how students (in this case mostly Seventh-day Adventists) relate novels and short stories to their religious and ethical beliefs. However, for the first time I sense some resistance from two or three of the students; so, you can appreciate how relieved I was to read Mary Rivkin's comment that sometimes she felt that both she and some of her students only wrote because it was an assignment. Nevertheless, I enjoy the personal contact with students and I doubt that I will ever teach as year without participating in some form of written dialogue with them.

Valerie Landis

Beltsville, MD

* * *

I think you should publish warnings about the addictive nature of dialogue journals! It seems as though they are a tremendous means of giving students a say in the direction of their education.

Sara Sill
Calabasas, California

Our pockets are bare again!
Renewal subscriptions will be most welcome--only $3.00. If it has been more than a year since you sent in a check, we'd love to hear from you. And please write us a note about who you are, how you heard about dialogue journals, and what you are doing with them for NOTES FROM THE FIELD.

Conference and Travel Notes

Jana Staton and Margaret Walworth presented the use of dialogue journals as an aid to reading in content areas at the TESOL meeting in New York, in April. These papers are now available. Write Margaret Walworth, Dept. of English, Gallaudet College, Washington, D.C. 20002.

Here are some of our plans for the coming year.

Joy Kreeft Peyton, Roger Shuy, and Jana Staton typically present at the Ethnography in Education forum at the Univ. of Penn., the last weekend in March. This year they presented papers based on a recently completed research report, "Analysis of studentteacher written interaction in the learning of English as a second language"

Joy Kreeft Peyton plans to present a paper on one aspect of our dialogue journal research with ESL students at the TESOL Summer Meeting, July 12-13, Washington, D.C.

Leslee Reed still conducts workshops in the Southern California area through UCLA's Writing Project, and may be available for workshops elsewhere during her free months.

Jana Staton will be one of the speakers at a FIPSE workshop at the University of Georgia (Athens) in mid-July. Call Don Rubin, Language Arts, School of Education, Univ. of Georgia for more information.

Joy Kreeft Peyton is going to spend May and June of this year in the Philippines and Thailand on a training project for CAL. She hopes as part of this trip to explore how dialogue journals can be used effectively in refugee education programs. This is an area we would like to spotlight in a future issue.

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DIALOGUE is the newsletter about the uses, benefits, and theory of dialogue journals, a practice of communicating in writing about topics of mutual interest through continuous, functional conversations between (usually) learners and teachers. This newsletter provides an informal means of sharing information, ideas and concerns among those who have begun using dialogue journals in the United States and in other countries. It is an outgrowth of a National Institute of Education research grant to describe and analyze the purposes, structure and benefits of dialogue journal communication (Analysis of Dialogue Journal Writing as a Communicative Event, Center for Applied Linguistics, 1982). For more information about research and practical applications, please write Jana Staton, c/o Center for Applied Linguistics, 3520 Prospect St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20007.

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Dialogue

December, 1985

Editors: Jana Staton
Joy Kreeft Peyton
Shelley Gutstein

Dialogue Journals as a Reading Event

> *"When I come in here, I always flip the pages, wanting to read your opinions or stories.....I really enjoy writing and get feedback from you as we're a lot the same and I'm glad to know that we are similar to each other." — a student at Gallaudet College, writing to his teacher, 1982*

The dialogue journal began as a way to communicate in the classroom (and probably in other settings not yet documented), not as a writing practice or method. However, about the time the dialogue journal came to the attention of some researchers (1979), there was a new focus on the need for children to write more, and on the lack of meaningful writing in schools. This new focus helped generate immediate interest in dialogue journals as a writing event. But obviously, the dialogue is also a powerful reading event. This issue of DIALOGUE is one way of re-directing our focus from the writing to the reading benefits of using dialogue journals, and of stressing the reading-writing connection.

This year, every education conference seems to be about the "reading-writing" connection. All too often, the connection is being made in the rhetoric of the article rather than in classroom practices being described. There are certainly theoretical reading-writing connections to be found--in the similarity of cognitive processing required, in the use of schema for understanding and planning/predicting, in the way that reading powerful literature supports good writing and that involvement in one's own writing leads to excitement for reading.

But dialogue journals offer something more than theory. They are a practical instance of reading and writing bound together in a single functional experience. In this issue, two teachers' accounts of the use of dialogue journals for reading and two research-supported reflections focus on the richness of the reading involved in the dialogue, and its clear influence on the more visible aspect of the process--students' writing.

We are fond of saying that "dialogue journals are like a friendly conversation, in which two participants write back and forth to each other." We want to amend that to read "...write back and forth to each other, thus constructing a mutually interesting reading text about self-generated topics, a text which has purpose and meaning for both readers." •

Research Report

Dialogue Writing: Analysis of Student-Teacher Interactive Writing in the Learning of English as a Second Language, by Kreeft, Shuy, Staton, Reed and Morroy. 1984.

A research and practitioner report on dialogue journal use in an ESL classroom. Available for $25. Send orders to Joy Peyton, c/o Center for Applied Linguistics; make checks payable to Center for Applied Linguistics.

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Dialogue Journals and Reading Comprehension

Roger W. Shuy

Traditionally, it is thought that children first learn to speak, then read, then write. No acceptable research or theory serves as a basis for approaching reading before writing and speaking before reading. Rather, the notion seems to have evolved as an artifact of institutional schooling. That is, children learn to talk before they even enter school. Once school starts, the practice is to teach children to understand the written symbols that represent talk, as a decoding of speech. Finally, once this is learned, children are taught to encode or write on paper that which they can now read or decode.

What has contributed most to this concept that reading and writing are separable tasks is our need for linearity. There seems to be, in the human mind, a need to reduce topics to some sort of minimal and necessarily sequential units. The widely cherished notion of a taxonomy of basic educational objectives that can be operationally defined is partially responsible for this. However administratively or industrially attractive such a notion may be, it runs afoul of the even more basic idea of our essential humanity. It may be possible to build lawn mowers in such a manner, but human learning turns out to be considerably more complex. By gaining industrial efficiency, we tend to lose our humanity. By answering the question "how?" we tend to lose sight of the human question, "why?"

While it seemed reasonable, or at least efficient, to assume the linear hypothesis of speaking to reading to writing, this assumption has led to great problems in helping children acquire literacy. For one thing, the material to be read was often very unlike the talk in which a young child regularly engages. If learning is to be facilitated, predictability is crucial. Children simply do no talk the way their books read. It also followed, logically, that if what they read was the model for what they wrote, their writing would also be very unlike the way they talk. The basic problem, as formulated here, is that learning to read and write, unlike learning to speak, has been situated in unrealistic and unpredictable models of language.

Our first research on dialogue journal writing (Staton, Shuy, Kreeft and Mrs. R. 1982) pointed the way to a solution to this problem. Dialogue writing is speech-like in nature. [It captures the natural phrasing children already use in understanding what others say]. It is closer by far to the actual talk of both participants than any of their writing in school contexts could be. Our first question then became, "Is dialogue journal writing more functional, more user-friendly, more developmentally facilitated than essay (or other more formulaic) writing?" Research has answered this question very positively. It is.

But there is more. If it is true that children learn to think more clearly, write better and communicate more effectively in dialogue journal writing, what can be said about their reading development in this medium? Is dialogue journal reading more functional, more user-responsive, more developmentally adapted for comprehension than basal readers?

In all of the dialogue journals analyzed to date, it is clear that even with non-native English speakers, the teacher's writing is processed in such a way that it is largely comprehended, suggesting that such reading provides excellent comprehension practice.

An objection might be made, however: "Isn't it easier to read language when it is written about a familiar topic, especially a topic which the readers introduced themselves?" Of course it is, but shouldn't reading be learned in familiar contexts, with known audiences, on familiar topics? Isn't such practice at the very core of "starting with children where they are?"

In one analysis of student comprehension of dialogue journal text, I studied the journal of a high school student at a school for the deaf. Diana (not her real name) scored at third grade reading level on the Stanford Achievement Test adapted for administration to the hearing impaired (SAT-HI).

I took her dialogue journal for the year, and compared her reading comprehension of her teacher's writing with her SAT-measured comprehension. Diana scored 92% accuracy in

(Continued on p. 3)

(Continued from p. 2)

understanding the teacher's questions, as determined by my analysis. She scored 100% in responding appropriately (i.e., with understanding) to the teacher's propositions.

Why, then, would a student achieve such a low score on the reading test? When the questions on the SAT were analyzed linguistically, it was revealed that in 40% of these questions, a preposition (in, on, toward, under, etc.) framed the key words for comprehension and selection of the correct answer. Preposition meaning is one of the most difficult for non-native speakers to process. Diana, being deaf, is not a native English speaker any more than a Bolivian student is. Her SAT scores, therefore, were determined by a disproportionately large quantity of the most difficult (for her) grammatical forms.

In her dialogue journal, where much more context is available surrounding the most difficult prepositions, she processed the meaning in an almost native-like manner, as shown by her intelligent responses. This suggests not only the inadequacies of isolated, de-contextualized sentences as an efficient means of measuring comprehension but also that dialogue journal interactions are an excellent way to acquire a language and reading competence, largely because of the contextual redundancy that natural language contains.

Diana's ability to comprehend dialogue journal text better than test question prose is a clear product of the predictability and contextual relevance of the stimulus language encountered. The revered linear process of speaking to reading to writing obviously does not work for a deaf child. It is likely, in fact, that such linearity does not work for any learner. Writing and reading are inseparable tasks and the closer the material to be read and written is to natural language, the more efficient the learning will be. ●

BACK ISSUES

Back issues of the newsletter, with a history of dialogue journal research and a bibliography, are available for $5. Send orders to Jana Staton, c/o Center for Applied Linguistics; make checks payable to HANDBOOK PRESS.

Secret Messages: Dialogue Journals as a Reading Event

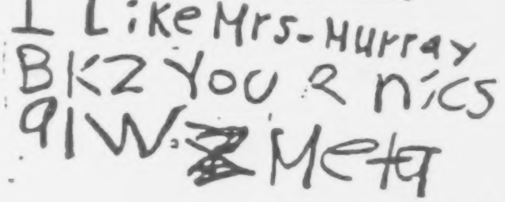
- Lynn Murray, Fairfax County Public Schools

Throw away the alphabet flash cards? Dispense with the boring drills? Forget the inane workbook pages? My kindergarteners first began keeping personal journals the day after I returned from a writing symposium where I heard of using journals in kindergarten.

I teach in a "special needs" school--a school identified as having a large number of low-income students, a high minority population, and a discrepancy between achievement and performance. I can't assume that my students will come to school with any knowledge of the alphabet or sound/symbol relationships; and in many cases they do not recognize their names in print. So when Richard drew a picture of a dog in his journal, decided dog was spelled "D" and asked, "Teacher, what shape that?," I saw journal writing as an effective and efficient teaching method to meet their needs. He was learning letter recognition, phonics, visual memory, and expressive language.

My children wrote in their journals daily and progressed through the stages of using initial sounds, to adding an ending sound, to using vowels medially, and began writing phrases and sentences. It was exciting and rewarding--for me and the children! They discovered they could communicate through the written word, a revelation that was especially valuable to the children learning English as a second language. (I have a mixture of native and nonnative English speakers in my class.) I was so convinced of the efficacy of journal writing that I never missed an opportunity to attend a workshop or to give an inservice on writing with five-year-olds.

I returned one afternoon from yet another workshop to find in Claire's journal her protest of my absence: "I LIKE MRS. MURRAY BECAUSE YOU ARE NICE. ALWAYS MEETING."



I Like Mrs-Hurray
BKZ You R nics
9lW ~~Z~~ Metg

(Continued on p. 4)

(Continued from p. 3)

By this time, I wasn't particularly flattered by the first sentence because I knew all too well the process by which Claire had produced it. Anyone writing with young children is aware of the "I like" or "I love" syndrome. Everyone knows "I," and someone in the class very early learns to spell "like" or "love." After that, labels, name tags, signs, book titles, previous journal entries, in fact anything that can be copied provides the ending to the sentence, without regard to meaning. In Claire's case she had learned to spell "like" from a classmate, copied my name from the classroom door, and added "because you are nice" after flipping back through her journal to a page where I had insisted she tell me why she liked someone. The "always meeting" part was probably true. In other students' journals there were entries such as "I love November" (from a calendar) and "I like crayola" (mis-copied instead of the word "orange" from a crayon). "I LOVE TSRTPC" was at least a good effort of spelling triceratops, but this student was capable of so much more.

I LOVE TSRTPC

I was getting frustrated with the writing.

After a few months, the daily personal journals weren't as exciting for the children, or for me; everyone was getting lazy. It wasn't only that the writing was becoming so predictable and hum-drum, but that I felt the expectations for these children were too low. Having seen their progress and their initiative in other areas, I knew they could continue to grow here.

We were all ready for a change when a colleague suggested trying dialogue journals to stimulate writing. I explained to the children that after they read aloud to me the page they had written in their journal that day, I would write each of them a "secret message" which we would read together the next day before writing again. The message was a response to what they had written, and sometimes included a question in hope of getting them to expand on a topic. What pleased me was their enthusiasm for "reading" and answering the secret message even before we went over it the next day. The idea that they could read on their own spread quickly through the class. I couldn't decide who was more pleased, Connie or I, when she brought me the following page and announced, "I already answered."

ILIKE
TNDrHrT
BAr

Dear Connie,
Do you have a tenderheart bear? ~~N~~Do you have a favorite stuffed animal? Can you tell me about it?

YES
BOXBANNY ✓

It was not unusual for a child to copy a word I had used and take it home for help from parents (any involvement from home was a very desirable consequence). And the cooperation among the children, helping each other figure out the message, was another bonus which I hadn't counted on. "I've got the same word in my journal. I think it's where"; or "I know that! It's pet."

One aspect of dialogue journals which is most gratifying is that it is possible to truly individualize reading instruction. Twenty-five children? No. Twenty-five reading groups!

Each dialogue journal session with a child is an opportunity for assessment, and can be turned into a tailor-made lesson with a specific objective. Whether a student is ready to learn contractions and compound words or is at the earlier stage of visual discrimination, of finding a word that starts with the same letter, each day each student gets the lesson that he or she needs. •

The Teacher's Writing as Text

- Jana Staton

In a written dialogue, the teacher and student together are constructing a reading text, using the student's interests, concerns, and vocabulary as the basis for the teacher's elaboration. While there is little argument that this constitutes a valid reading event, we may ask how cognitively demanding is the teacher's writing as text. One way to go about answering that question is to examine the written text of the dialogue in comparison to the texts of basal readers which are considered appropriate for the child's reading level. Does the teacher's writing, done quickly and without thought of controlled vocabulary or complexity of text structure, match the quality of writing in basal readers?

As an example of how this research can be conducted, I choose one student's dialogue journal and the assigned basal reader from one of Leslee Reed's classes at Alexandria Avenue School. Michael had recently come to this country from Burma; at the beginning of sixth grade he was tested and assigned to a Level 4 reader (approximately second grade) in one of the major basal reading series.

The basal reader texts at Level 4 are written in very simplified prose, and rely on the illustrations for much of their cohesion and meaning. A sample of the text from one story is given below:

> Kay said, "Here comes a man.
> Who is he, Dad?
> Is he the zoo man?"
>
> "Yes, he is," said Dad.
>
> "The elephant sees the man,"
> said Kay.
> "This elehant can run, Dad."

During the first weeks of school, Michael and the teacher were also reading and writing together in their dialogue journal. On the sixth day, Michael's entry and the teacher's response read like this:

Michael: (September 26, 1980)
Mrs. Reed, you know I'm live in Burmese. The Burma school is no good. you know why? At the Burma school is no free lunch. At the America school is good free lunch and the games is funny games. At the Burma school is no games. Only is you can fight so I don't like the Burma school. The America school is "you very good student and you can skip to the 6 grate or 5 grate anything"! So I like a-am America school. Where are you come from? How old are you Mrs. Reed. You Know Mrs. Reed, here is all is good friend.

Mrs. Reed:
I'm glad you are at Alexandria Avenue school. you study and work so hard so you will be very smart. It is good to learn to play games to get exercise. To grow well everyone needs to eat a good lunch. Your mind works better if you have eaten the right food. I was born in Idaho. It is in the United States. I am very old! Yes! Everyone is glad to be our friend so we do not hit or fight.

I analyzed these two entries and two from the spring of the year for syntactic complexity and discourse structure, in comparison to the basal reader text. The table below shows the comparison of T-unit scores on five passages:

	T-Unit Score
Assigned Basal Text	5.27
Michael's Fall DJ	8.3
Reed's Fall DJ	8.8
Michael's Spring DJ	11.1
Mrs. Reed's Spring DJ	17.8 9

These scores reflect real differences in the text structure. The basal reader has only one complex sentence. Michael on the sixth day of writing does better: two compound and one complex. The teacher's response matches his rather precisely: 3 complex sentences, all describing conditional relationships between actions and events. By spring the teacher has greatly

(Continued on p. 6)

(Continued from p. 5)

increased the complexity of her writing, demanding much greater comprehension and inferencing from the student. Here is a sample of her writing:

Mrs. Reed, April 10, 1981

Yes, I will explain why every class was very quiet for one minute at 9 o'clock this morning. In Atlanta, a big city in our United States, there have been 23 children killed by someone or maybe more than one person. They have not caught that very sick person. We were very quiet to give us a chance to remember that 23 have been killed. 23 families have been saddened and feel so sad because their children are dead. It gives us a chance to remember that even here in Los Angeles there are sick people. Boys and girls must stay away from strangers and even stay away from people they know, if those people do not act the way they should!

An even more important difference comes in the discourse structure and functions found in the dialogue interactions. The basal reader at this level is filled with descriptions and narratives that are cognitively undemanding of the student. In the dialogue journal, in contrast, both Michael and the teacher are writing arguments, arguing for a point of view and offering evidence to support it. The teacher's writing discusses relationships between events and actions, and uses causal and temporal conjunctive devices--if, because, in order to. Her text not only matches the way Michael thinks and writes, but it demands that he think. She demands inferencing and drawing of conclusions in order for her text to be understood.

Michael's production of written language gives the teacher continual evidence of what he can comprehend in reading, and forms the lower boundary of his zone of proximal development. The teacher's response seems to be "just beyond his grasp"--demanding greater inferencing and synthesis of knowledge, and changing as he provides evidence of growing comprehension. ●

Using Dialogue Journals in Reading Classes

- Carol Harmatz-Levin, formerly at Georgetown U.

Dialogue journal writing requires dialogue journal reading. It is under this premise that I have justified using journals in reading classes. I discovered, however, that journal exchanges can provide more than personal, interactive language practice. Much like Leslee Reed, whose concept of dialogue journals evolved out of bits of paper overflowing with communication, I decided to elicit in writing my university EFL students' feelings about the reading process. I began by following up on a homework assignment and a classroom discussion. I had asked students a week earlier to spend fifteen minutes a day reading something of their own choice in English; this was not to include homework assignments. In class we had been discussing ways to learn vocabulary, and students had been sharing "tricks" that worked for them.

So, without a thought towards using dialogue journals with this class (I was already using them daily in another one), I passed out slips of paper and asked students what they had been reading and what they did in order to remember new vocabulary. When I read their responses that evening, I realized that the process of reading was unique to each one of them. Some had very definite, established procedures for attacking their reading material; some spent time reading but were not very involved in the process. Some felt insecure. Most of the students, however, seemed eager to share their feelings and methods in this non-threatening, non-judgmental context.

I continued our "conversations" in weekly entries for the seven-week session, and although we didn't confine ourselves exclusively to the topic of reading, I emerged from the experience with a better idea of what my students were going through with regard to reading and how I could help. I also learned that some students had very healthy strategies for learning vocabulary. Some used techniques such as studying the same vocabulary over a period of time, reading texts of similar topics, or writing personal dictionaries in English with new words in context.

(Continued on p. 7)

(Continued from p. 6)

There were various types of benefits to the students from this kind of directed dialogue journal writing. One is that they can get feedback about their reading processes--are they on the right track or not? One student's approach to learning new vocabulary was to look in the dictionary whenever he encountered a new word while reading. When I suggested that he not turn to the dictionary before trying to guess the meaning, he responded:

S: *For me is difficult to guess because I haven't had a rich vocabulary. I tried to guess but some times I don't get the right mean. I mean, a exact mean which I can use the same word for other ways.*

T: *When we guess from context, we can only understand the word in that situation--not in others (unless we guess again). If you can understand the general idea of the story, you don't need the dictionary. If you use the dictionary for all the words you don't know, then you'll have a LIST. That's all. Only a list. Maybe your expectations are too high.*

S: *Thank you for your help. I will try this way. Some times I want to know everything at ones and this is very difficult thing to do. I have to thing that I will study Englihs for 5 years and I will have time.*

Besides giving feedback, I was also able to expand students' repertoires of techniques without prescribing the same method for everyone. I was cautious with my wording so students would feel encouraged rather than obligated to try new approaches.

T: *You might want to consider reading something else along with your political material. It would feel good to read something light, easy and fun, too. Then, you would also have the experience of doing some reading that is not slow. What do you think?*

S: *I think so. But sometimes it boors me to red funny things or light. What I will try to do is to find other topics that are not political but maybe interesting for me. Maybe history or science. I think I need more vocabulary so I'm going to try to change topics.* •

New Dialogue Journal Research in ESL

A new study of dialogue journal writing is now underway at CAL, funded by NIE through the Center for Language Education and Research. In this project we will be working closely with K-9 teachers in the Washington, D.C. area as well as other parts of the country who are using or want to use dialogue journals as part of their writing program with limited English proficient students. We will be holding workshops and documenting classroom practice and student development in dialogue journals and on other writing tasks. We will also be conducting a nationwide survey of ESL teachers who have used or are now using dialogue journals. This project will continue for five years, and we will be reporting to you periodically on progress and findings. If you wish to dialogue with us about this project, write to Joy Peyton at CAL. ALSO LET JOY KNOW IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO COMPLETE A COPY OF THE SURVEY FORM. (Pg. 9)

After their initial dialogue entry, several students confessed that they didn't like to read or that they were slow readers even in their native language. By airing these negative feelings and trying to get closer to their source, students tended to feel less anxious about reading. One such student's entry began, "The problem that I had is I don't like to read in English and I try my best but I juest read 10 pags then I quit reading." By the end of our journal writing, she was the one suggesting possible reading topics and after we had discussed her overuse of the dictionary, she agreed to at least try not to use it so much.

In conclusion, effective dialogue journal writing may assume various forms. This was my first experience with guiding the topic of an entire class in a single direction. Although some students found this confining and changed the topic, most used the opportunity as a forum to discuss their reading, either with a sense of pride or with insecurity. In all cases, the dialogue journal writing gave each student the opportunity to discuss their feelings privately with a non-judgmental partner and to feel more positive about reading in a foreign language. •

LESLEE'S PAGE

Effective Teacher Change: A Focus on the Individual

- Leslee Reed

I can't count how many times I have attended conferences or advisory meetings where the topic for discussion was to find out what teachers need in order to be more effective. As a teacher myself, who must usually rush from a classroom with chalk-dust still on my hands after the usual day of hectic and unexpected events, I listen intently, hoping to find out "how and why" or "how and when" or even "if and when."

Often grand ideas emerge involving better teacher training, better inservice education of regular or ESL teachers, better materials including software, etc. There is always much talk of concepts, and the need to make sure that every teacher really understands the concepts.

Later as I mull over these kinds of meetings, my frustrations grow as I think about what is *not* said, by me as a teacher, or by others. What is it that teachers *really* need, in order to grow and be more effective? How can the advisors, coordinators and administrators who are truly interested in helping teachers offer us the most help?

What seems to be missing from the dialogue at such meetings is a focus on the *individual*, either teacher or student. Teachers are teachers because they truly want to teach. Requiring all of us to take the same course so we will all be able to handle a certain "type" of child "properly" or "correctly" is a denial of the very art of teaching. All teachers, just like all students, learn, adapt and use or reject ideas depending on their own experiences and backgrounds. We cannot create teacher/robots who will teach all students in an identical manner according to some correct precept.

I see teaching as a honed skill, individual to each person. It has been my experience with many many student teachers that I have learned far more from them than they ever did from me! The very best ones, after having watched me teach, using the same group of students and following my techniques, drew on their own experience and their own strengths and created a lesson that was their very own.

To enhance teaching, we as teachers need to be inspired and trusted to find our own way in using these new ideas and approaches, so that the individual teacher can be just that, an individual. How about inspiration for teachers who want observable and digestible evidence of their success, and suggest options for application and evaluation?

The second factor which gets lost in the platitudes and educational jargon is attitude. Attitude, whether student's or teacher's, has a powerful bearing on the outcome of any lesson or skill being developed. For the most part our students acquiesce to our instructional presentations. But, depending on the stresses in their lives at any given moment, our lessons may or may not be inculcated into their thinking.

How often has every single word of a lesson fallen on ears closed because of the attitude of the learner? How can a student be involved with the "lighthouse lighting" sequence when it has no relevance for him and the uppermost thought in his mind is whether or not the landlord is going to make the family get out? Or when the concern which is nagging at a very conscious level is what will happen to the father or uncle who is on 'parole' (whatever that is)? School pressures are intense, especially for ESL students. Frequently they must be the voice of their parents, translating terms that they neither understand nor have enough competence in their native language to comprehend. How responsible they have to be!

In our discussions of the knowledge and effective practices which all teachers must have, we get lost in abstract concepts, educational jargon, and curricular objectives. We even convince ourselves at times that studying the proper technique, taking the correct classes, and fulfilling the requirements for getting credentialled, make a teacher a teacher. Teaching for most teachers, however, is not one particular plan or a set pattern or formula. It is the constant evaluation, minute by minute, of what is happening; the ability and the fortitude to change a lesson in midstream if necessary, to reevaluate and alter direction, to read the blank faces as well as the eager ones. Active teaching requires a multitude of sensory approaches by the teacher,

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especially for those students handicapped by attitude, language or an individual inability to learn the way others do.

Please, I want to say, help me, a teacher who really wants to improve. Have I missed something in all this talk? Are you really concerned about me?

All teachers, as well as all students, can become inspired. Attitudes can be altered when minds are free to focus. As I struggle to teach my students, or to give workshops for teachers, it is imperative that uppermost in my mind is the fact that I am not teaching a lesson or a concept. I am teaching real, warm human beings with deep concerns, fears, and doubts, each as individual as a fingerprint. ●

Survey

As part of the new Dialogue Journal Project at CAL, we are conducting a survey about dialogue journal use in ESL. If you have used or are now using dialogue journals with ESL students and would be willing to complete a brief survey questionnaire, please return this slip to Joy Peyton at CAL.

- -

TO: Joy Peyton
Dialogue Journal Project
Center for Applied Linguistics
1118 - 22nd Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20037

Please send me a survey questionnaire.

Name____________________________________

Address__________________________________

____

____

Recent Dialogue Journal Publications

Joy Kreeft Peyton. Literacy through written interaction. To appear in Passage: a journal of refugee education. Spring, 1986.

Nancy Rhodes. Dialogue journals—Trends and applications for foreign students. Tapping Our Resources: ESOL Staff Development Workshop. Board of Education of Montgomery County, Rockville, MD. Spring, 1985.

Jana Staton. Using dialogue journals for developing thinking, reading, and writing with hearing-impaired students. The Volta Review. Vol. 87, no. 5. September, 1985.

Terry Shepherd, Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, writes that he presented similar ideas in three publications, written many years ago! In these articles he discusses the power of written dialogue for developing oral language with children who would otherwise not communicate at all!

"Logues for Communication." Elementary English (NCTE). XLV: 8 pp. 1080-82. December, 1966.

"The language experience approach..." Occasional Papers on Linguistics #1. Proceedings, First International Conference on Frontiers in Language Proficiency and Dominance Testing, Southern Illinois University, 1977. ERIC ED 144 400 (focuses on second language learning).

"Living with a Child with Autistic Tendencies," (1979), Working with Parents of Handicapped Children: A Book of Readings for School Personnel, M.L. Henniger & E.M. Nesselroad Eds., University Press of America: Lanham, MD, 1984.

Handouts/Articles Available

Joy Kreeft Peyton has a handout that she uses in workshops with ESL teachers at all levels. Copies of Nancy's articles and Joy's handout can be obtained by writing to Joy Peyton, CAL. ●

NOTES FROM THE FIELD

Dialogue Journals In Teacher Training

In teacher training I have found journals to be successful for conferencing with teachers about my observations of their classes. During a week that I have scheduled a conference with a teacher, I try to observe in their class every day. After each observation I write a note in the teacher's journal.

Before beginning the conference, I read over the week's notes and use them as the basis for the conference. After the conference I give the notebook to the teacher and ask him or her to summarize the week in the journal or to respond in some other way. One time I wrote some rather critical, but (I hoped) constructive comments in a teacher's journal. I handed it to the teacher on Friday, and worried all weekend that I had been too critical. On Monday morning, she returned the journal to me. In it she had written a long response actually thanking me for my comments and discussing how she planned to change her lesson plan for that day. I felt relieved, and I wondered whether she would have been able to tell me those things in person.

Using journals in the teacher observation process has been valuable for me in several ways. It allows the teacher and supervisor to have ongoing, informal, private dialogue. Teachers can take time to read comments which, if only spoken, could be forgotten or misunderstood. In addition, when it is time to write a final evaluation, it is easy to see themes which repeat themselves, and it is much easier to write an in-depth evaluation, citing specific journal entries as evidence. o

-Christina Herbert, Asst. ESL Coord.
Phanat Nikhom (Thailand) Refugee Camp

In Special Education

As coordinator of special services for 101 handicapped students, ages 16-19, I have been using "Dialogue" with all four of my English teachers to help them in their efforts to reach students in their classes. Our school is 100% mainstreamed, so the teachers are able to use Dialogue for all students in their classes. We love it! And we thank you!

-K. McCarthy, Troy, OH

- - - - - - - -

One of the activities of the New York City Writing Project is a series of in-service courses in New York City high schools. Getting teachers and students involved with journals and specifically dialogue journals has been one of our successes. The May issue was particularly interesting because of the increasing special education population in New York City high schools. The dialogue journal has been our best way to involve these students and their teachers with writing. One special education teacher wrote her own journal and gave it to her students for their responses. One of her students came to school almost only when it was his turn to read the teacher's journal. Indeed, the first time that his turn to read the journal came around, the teacher did not want to give him her journal, since he would keep it over the weekend and she feared never seeing him or the journal again. Monday began without the student, but a few minutes after nine, he came running in the door, slowed to a walk as he came up the aisle, and coolly laid the journal on the teacher's desk. The teacher reported that his responses were insightful and quite lengthy. ●

-Maurice Bolmer, N.Y. City Writing Project

In Teaching Adult ESL

"To help their English run like a river--"

I heard about the dialogue journal at an ESL Teachers' Conference in Washington State. I immediately started to use it with refugee adults in the middle level class to ease the flow of language into spontaneous thought and get the students away from the stilted practice of workbook English. I explained that the journals we made were for private conversation between each student and me. They could write about anything they liked or tell me about their last trip to a park, etc.

By the end of the first quarter, the writing of the students had doubled. It was flowing and spontaneous. They repeatedly wanted me to correct their work but I explained the exercise papers and compositions were to be corrected; the journals were to help their English run like a river, freely and easily. They laughed and were often frustrated when they couldn't say something smoothly. When they asked me how to say something, I helped them on a blank piece of paper. I had mixed feelings about doing this, but it didn't happen too often and it did relieve their frustration. (I am trying to learn Norwegian and I know frustration can add a sense of weary defeat to language learning.) I decided helping them with idioms and phrases oiled the continual flow of communication--my goal. ●

-Marie Rice, Takoma, WA

With Native English Speakers in High School

I am a high school teacher in a year-round school. After hearing about dialogue journals from Sara Sill in the USC Writing Project, I began to use the journal with one senior writing class of about 20 students on the first day of the semester. As I'm sure you have heard before, I wasn't sure that the idea would work with older students (Sara had said that it was being used at all levels but the truth is I wasn't sure that I could keep up with the answering of 20 students). I was delighted with the results, so I began using them with two other classes (about 70 students).

The students were allowed to turn in their journals whenever they wanted to do so; I gave them credit for the amount of writing they did, not for the quality of the writing. That way I did not get every journal every day; in fact, I answered between 15 and 20 daily.

I was truly amazed by what happened in the journals. Some students who would not talk in class became garrulous in writing. Others used it to develop short stories and fantasies. One young man ceased doing any other assignments and wrote wonderfully humourous tall tales about why he had failed to turn in his vocabulary sentences. After he developed some confidence in me, he wrote at length about being an abused child. It may have been another fantasy, but the pain he poured onto those pages rang true. He gave me permission to use this quote, after describing what his father had done to him.

> *I had to tell someone. Its easier to write it down then to say it to someones face. you know I think I have forgiven him for doing that to me but I ain't sure. If you ever ask me oraly about this I will deny I know what you are talking about.*

If anything convinced me that the journals are a priceless tool, not only for developing writing skills, but also for improving understanding and communication between me and my students, it was this misspelled and ungrammatical cry. I have also found that I prefer reading their journals to grading their journals to grading their papers. The journals really take a load off the teacher. I have found a way to get the students to write spontaneously, without jumping through hoops to give them a pre-writing experience.

-Cynthia Shelton, Long Beach, CA

Presentations

Joy Kreeft Peyton and Jodi Crandall of CAL spoke at the Foreign Service Institute on "Dialogue Journals: Making the Reading/Writing Connection," as part of the English Language Teaching Seminar for the Overseas Briefing Center.

Two presentations on dialogue journals are planned for the TESOL '86 convention in Anaheim, March 3-7, 1986. As part of a panel on journal writing, Joy Kreeft Peyton will review recent research on dialogue journals with ESL students and Margaret Walworth of Gallaudet College will talk about dialogue journals with deaf college students. Also, Joy Peyton has proposed to present a paper on acquisition of grammatical morphology in ESL students' dialogue journal writing. We don't know yet if our proposals have been accepted, but look for us on the program!

Jana Staton will talk on the teacher's writing as reading text at the Maryland State Reading Association in February, 1986, and the Virginia State Reading Association in March, 1986.

Far East Travels

Three of our favorite people have been or are now somewhere in Asia this fall, doing their best to encourage (we almost said convert) everyone to try dialogue journals. Chances are that those they have visited will soon start conducting dialogue journal workshops of their own, so, those of you in Asia, watch for them.

Nancy Rhodes of the Center for Applied Linguistics spoke in November to an applied linguistics graduate seminar at the Chinese University of Hong Kong on the use of dialogue journals in the EFL classroom.

Frances A. Davis, Princeton Research Forum, gave three lectures which included information about dialogue journals for the English department, International School of the Sacred Heart in Tokyo; in Hong Kong for about 80 social services, rehabilitation and vocational counselors and deaf educators, and at the Conassion School for the Deaf in Singapore. She also managed to conduct a workshop for teachers in the refugee camp at Phanat Nikhom, Thailand.

Madeline Adkins, a research assistant on Joy Kreeft Peyton's NIE grant, is now teaching in Japan at the National Language Laboratory School in Kyoto, and has begun to conduct workshops for fellow teachers there. ●

NEXT ISSUE: Dialogue Journals in ESL, EFL, and Bilingual Education

The use of dialogue journals in ESL, EFL, and bilingual education classrooms is booming and growing at all levels, from kindergarten to adult education, and from beginning to advanced levels of English proficiency. Our next issue will focus on this major area of education, from both a practitioner and a research point of view. Please let us know if you would like to submit an article, either presenting your practice or summarizing your research. Information or observations in the form of letters are also welcome. WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU. Send to Joy Peyton at CAL.

Subscription Form

For new subscribers and renewals (if you have not subscribed since June, 1985).

I would like to receive one year's subscription of Dialogue for 1986. Enclosed please find my check for $3 (made payable to Handbook Press).

Name ______________________________

Mailing Address ______________________________

____

Professional Affiliation ______________________________

Phone (W) (   ) ______________ (H) (   ) ______________

☐ Enclosed also is $5 for the Back Issues of Dialogue including a history of dialogue journal use, publications list, and dissertation abstracts.

DIALOGUE is the newsletter about the uses, benefits, and theory of dialogue journals, a practice of communicating in writing about topics of mutual interest through continuous, functional conversations between (usually) learners and teachers. This newsletter provides an informal means of sharing information, ideas and concerns among those who have begun using dialogue journals in the United States and in other countries. It is an outgrowth of a National Institute of Education research grant to describe and analyze the purposes, structure and benefits of dialogue journal communication (Analysis of Dialogue Journal Writing as a Communicative Event, Center for Applied Linguistics, 1982). For more information about research and practical applications, please write Jana Staton, c/o Center for Applied Linguistics, 1118 - 22nd Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20037.

DIALOGUE appears approximately three times a year, at a cost of $3.00 to cover duplication and mailing. A volume of back issues is available for $5.00. Make checks payable to Jana Staton.

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Dialogue

March, 1986

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DIALOGUE JOURNALS IN ESL SETTINGS

This issue grows out of the tremendous appeal of dialogue journals with students learning English as a second language (ESL). Dialogue journals are being used in as many different ESL contexts as we can think of: at early elementary levels, with teenagers, and with adults; in both adult basic education and university classes; for early literacy development as well as for discussion of advanced literary texts; in language arts and content classes--social studies, math, and science; in ESL pull-out and mainstream classes with a few ESL students. Four sessions at the TESOL Convention in March focused on dialogue journal writing. Why has this practice caught on so quickly and made so much sense in so many different settings?

Possibly the most important reason may also be the most obvious: dialogue journal writing allows genuine communication--an opportunity for a student learning a new language and culture to use the language in a meaningful, functional context, with another person who is more proficient. As Courtney Cazden points out in the first article of this issue, when our educational methods and materials become so carefully structured and compartmentalized that the socially embedded, interactive nature of language and learning gets lost in our curriculum, we need to search for new opportunities for establishing human relationships with language.

Everyone we talk to has told us how enjoyable dialogue journal writing is, both for them and for their students. Even students with a history of poor school performance, who have done very little reading or writing and shown little interest in anything related to schoolwork, have blossomed in the dialogue journal interaction. Their enthusiasm, often confined initially to this context, has eventually spilled over to their other work. How else will students become invested in language and take pleasure in using it than by using it for enjoyable purposes?

Even we have been surprised at the versatility of dialogue journals. Leslee Reed, with whom we first worked, developed her own approach, to suit her and her students' needs. In this issue she discusses how the concept of sheltered English, so popular in ESL education today, applies to written dialogue as well. As other teachers hear about the practice, they quickly adapt the basic framework (a regular, ongoing, written conversation) to meet their particular needs. Initial questions that we had about the adaptability of the practice are being answered by students and teachers working together to find those answers.

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OPEN HOUSE AT AERA

FRIDAY, APRIL 18, 1986, 5-7 P.M.

For anyone using or interested in dialogue journals or research thereon--come and find out what others are doing!

Sheraton Palace Hotel

Hosted by Jana Staton and Roger Shuy
(Check at desk for Staton/Shuy room number).

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Linda Hughes addresses one question in this issue: How can written dialogue be begun and maintained with very young students in an ESL pull-out program, who have little exposure to written communication and little time in the pull-out class?

The written interaction is a valuable source of knowledge--certainly about students' interests, concerns, and progress, but also about the teacher's own effectiveness in communicating with different students. Linda Sellevaag discusses patterns of development in the writing and attitudes about writing of university ESL students. Shelley Gutstein explores the possibility of using dialogue journals as a performance measure of students' communicative ability. The review of Robby Morroy's dissertation identifies teacher strategies that promote student communication.

With dialogue journal writing, we have rediscovered what we knew all along. When we find an effective practice, that involves a genuine exchange of ideas, the possibilities for its use are limitless. ●

ESL Teachers as Language Advocates for Children

- Courtney B. Cazden, Harvard University

Maximizing students' time-on-task is widely advertised these days as a prescription for all our educational ills. Unfortunately, the nature of the tasks don't get nearly as much attention as the amount of time. They deserve far more attention, particularly because of the influence on the curriculum of multiple-choice tests.

An historical discussion of this influence is presented by anthropologist and social historian Shirley Brice Heath and high-school English teacher, Amanda Branscombe, drawing on Calhoun's historical analysis (1970) of *The Intelligence of a People:*

> From an historical examination of how American intelligence changed between 1750 and the mid-twentieth century, Calhoun believes that "intelligence is first of all a kind of social relation" (Calhoun, p. 28), and argues that throughout the history of American schooling, teachers and tests judge the mental capacity of students on the basis of their performance as communicator and audience. Yet, the varieties of ways in which students could learn to respond as communicator and audience decreased sharply after 1870, when schools began to place more and more emphasis on standardized written tests as measures of intelligence. Performance of disjointed skills replaced earlier emphases on holistic conceptions of communicator and audience. Levels of testing teased apart certain areas of competence in communicating, but left concealed the ways of blending these to achieve the whole: an "audience community," (Calhoun, p. 340) sharing experiences through oral and written communication.... Through mechanistic linguistic tasks, such as spelling tests and grammar drills, schools claim to impart communication skills. Yet, the academic discourse forms which lie at the heart of success in the higher levels of schooling--oral and written extended prose, sequenced explanation, and logical arguments--rarely receive explicit identification and discussion (shortened from Heath and Branscombe, 1985).

The danger of such "reductionism"--fractionating complex tasks into component parts that, no matter how well practiced, can never reconstitute the complex whole--applies to all education today. But it must be of special concern where second language learning is a significant educational goal.

What can teachers do? How can teachers advance the "intelligence"--the communicator-audience relationship--of all our students? Letter-writing, among students or between students and their teacher, is one kind of holistic writing experience that can have powerful effects. Heath and Branscombe describe the letter-writing between Branscombe's 9th grade Basic English students and her 11th and 12th grade students in a higher track General English class. Through the Northeast Bilingual Education Support Center connected with the University of Hartford (Connecticut), limited English-

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speaking children are in correspondence via an electric mail system with children around the world (Dennis Sayers, personal communication, 4/85). And between students and their teachers there are the well-documented dialogue journals.

(Excerpted from an invited plenary address at TESOL, 1985, New York City. To appear in D.S. Enright & P. Rigg (Eds.). *Children and ESL: Integrating Perspectives.* Washington, DC: TESOL.) •

References

Calhoun, Daniel. 1970. *The Intelligence of a People.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Heath, Shirley Brice, & Branscombe, Amanda. 1985. 'Intelligent writing' in an audience community: Teacher, students and researcher. In S.W. Freedman (Ed.). *The Acquisition of Written Language: Revision and Response.* Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

"Sheltered English" Applied to Writing

- Leslee Reed

Each of us began life with the need to communicate, and we did--without grammar rules or repetitive drills. We simply developed our language through the process of playing with various sounds and words. Sounds that did not achieve our desired ends were discarded; those that advanced them were retained.

Being an active participant in the learning process, with activities and language that involve the learner, is primary to native language speakers. When a mother talks to a baby, the infant may not understand much more than the attention being showered on it, but unconscious learning is going on, and continual exposure to language prepares the child to communicate. A mother doesn't stop trying to talk to her baby just because he doesn't initially understand a complete sentence like "Daddy is coming home." Instead, she repeats, rephrases, and encourages participation--"Say, 'Daddy.'" "See Daddy come?" "Let's wave to Daddy." Neither does she explain to the baby that it is now 5:30, that Daddy should be home by now, but the traffic has been heavy today, so he will be late. Instead she uses "sheltered English," language and concepts the baby can understand and participate in, information directly relevant to the situation. Whatever is not completely understood at least imparts the sound, cadence, and feel that all of this talk has to do with "Daddy."

We are seeing that ESL students go through much the same process. We have thought that drills and practice in repeating sounds would enhance the learning of a new language, but now are finding that using "sheltered English" in the classroom assists our ESL students to communicate without overwhelming them with every word and concept that a fourth grader (for example) should know. By using objects, body language, facial expressions, pointing, and exaggerated voice tone, we communicate with them, promote their understanding, and make them an active part of classroom activities.

When I look through my own dialogue journals, I see the same kind of sheltered English being used. One student, Thuy, wrote one day:

> *Mrs. R why can't we play baseball why we are threw ball everytime are tomorrow we could play baseball Mrs. R yesterday I eat my brother brithday.*

Since Thuy had been invoved in throwing, catching and pitching that day, I used those terms in my response:

> *We need to work on throwing, catching and pitching if we are to be really good ball players.*
>
> *Which brother had the birthday? Did he have cake?*

The next day Thuy wrote:

> *That is my big brother birthday that not my birthday my birthday is March 27 I like have a cake. We team have a little bit and Ray team have a log of people.*

Thuy clearly understood some of what I wrote and responded to make clear whose birthday it was and to complain about the uneven teams. Oral communication in class was impossible for him at that point, but English in this sheltered context gave him the practice and the courage to continue trying.

Another student used a pattern approach in his journal.

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Today I play ball. Tomorrow I play ball The next day I play ball.

I responded:

Play ball in area 17. Play with the boys and girls of our room. Today you read about the days of the week. I write to you today. Tomorrow you will write to me.

The writer used the language of his work during the day and applied it to his own situation, repeating part of a calendar lesson that involved assembling the days of the week and matching them with scheduled P.E. activities. These words applied to him, and he wanted to write about his own activities. My response, in equally simple language, extended his writing by including some of the words he had used here with words in earlier entries.

ESL students may have questions during class lessons, but their language can prevent their asking them. Following a class activity in which many maps were compared with the globe and the distortion of land masses on different maps identified, U Chal wrote:

What map don't have distosan?

In writing, his academic curiosity was not hampered by his insecurity with oral language. My answer was in simple, clear language--"sheltered English."

The best map is the globe. It is too hard to carry so the best flat map is the equal area map. It shows almost no distortion.

Dignity and respect for the students' need to communicate, to use language to serve their felt needs, helps them to function in a new language. The individuality and the caring attitude shown through dialogue journals to the ESL student are bound to influence their view of life and their self-worth.

Writing and Reflecting on Writing

- Linda Sellevaag

Northern Virginia Community College

During the ESL essay writing course I taught at Northern Virginia Community College in the fall of 1985, the most popular activity was the weekly writing of dialogue journal entries. Many students commented on how much they enjoyed the journals, and I enjoyed reading the student entries and responding to them. This generally positive feeling toward the journals encouraged me to take a closer look at what was actually going on in this written interaction, and what changes in writing ability and attitude toward writing in English it might be generating. When I examined five dialogue journals from my class written over the course of the ten-week session, I discovered three ways in which the journals gave my students the opportunity to improve their writing abilities.

First, the journals gave my students the opportunity to increase their overall fluency. In terms of sheer quantity, in each journal I looked at, the student wrote more in later entries than in earlier entries. The only exception was, ironically, the most skilled writer in the class, who wrote very little in his last entry, stating, "Sometimes, I feel an empty space in my mind. Like now." Apparently, he was suffering from writer's block that day. Throughout the quarter he had told me that it was hard for him to write in English for just 20 minutes (the amount of time they were given for dialogue journal writing).

In addition to the greater quantity of writing, their journals showed a decrease in the number of grammatical errors. In every case, there were fewer grammatical errors per page at the end of the year than at the beginning. The extent to which this decrease can be attributed to the dialogue journal writing itself cannot, of course, be determined exactly. Other factors were

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also at work during this period. However, it seems reasonable that some of the improvement arose from the enjoyable reading and writing practice which the journals provided.

Second, students had the opportunity to express their personal concerns and to receive personal feedback. For the most part, my students did not choose to write about abstract concepts or academic topics in their journals, but about their own experiences in the past, problems in the present, and hopes for the future. Many are recent refugees and wrote about leaving their countries and coming to the U.S. One Cambodian student, who said that thinking thinking about his past still gave him a "cold sweat," expressed his gratitude at having someone read and understand his experiences:

> *Thanks to you that have read through the journal I wrote. You are the only one that really understands about what the writer has written. The writer would expect to have more readers like you.*

In fact, some of the Asian students who were the most silent in class wrote most extensively and freely about themselves in the journal. One Vietnamese student wrote:

> *I have been [here] five years but I am not pretty good at communication in English. I still have trouble with express my thought so someone could understand me better and get to know more about my private life.*

He seemed to find in the dialogue fostered by the journal a place where he could be understood and where he felt free to share what he was thinking and feeling about his life.

Finally, the students had an opportunity to reflect with me about their writing and about themselves as writers. Throughout the quarter, many (like the students above) shared their wish to be heard and understood. They discussed difficulties they had and wrote about wanting to improve their writing and to receive assistance in improving their skills. One student responded to my desire to know more about his country by saying:

> *I am very happy to hear you [are] looking forward to hearing more...[but] at the same time it makes me miserable! I am always miserable whenever I want to write something in English (as you know it is so poor!) even though my idea--I think--is not so poor.*

This student, who was in fact the most sophisticated writer in the class, was correct in saying that his ideas were not poor. The journal gave me the chance to encourage him that his writing was really quite good and that he should continue with it.

Another student perhaps best summed up the impact of the journals on student writing. She stated that writing in English had always been a "handicap" for her, but that writing the journals had helped her gain confidence in her writing and overcome some of her problems:

> *We don't only have communication but have learned a lot from each other and at the same time we are writing in English. I always feel bad to do any writing because of the many misktakes...[It] was smart of you too not to make any corrections...When you don't know you go ahead and don't feel bad.*

I need to go back now and look at what the other students said about their writing. I hope that, as a result of the journals, they also have found a context in which they "don't feel bad" about their writing.

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Dialogue Journal Communication: Classroom, Linguistic Social and Cognitive Views, Jana Staton, Roger Shuy, Joy Kreeft Peyton, and Leslee Reed, is now actually at ABLEX, to appear in Marcia Farr's Writing Research Series. This is a much improved version of the first NIE report (Staton, et al, 1982), with readable charts and lots of examples.

We are trying to convince ABLEX to work swiftly on the editing, so that it might come out by next year, and to make a prepublication offer to our newsletter subscribers, which should whittle the cost down somewhat. If you find yourself ordering another ABLEX book, and could add a note saying you are eager to see the Dialogue Journal volume, it would help light a fire up there in Norwood. You may also want to write for the brochure describing the entire Writing Research Series.

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Making Language Connections: Writing in ESL Pull-Out Classes

- Linda Hughes, Prince George's County Public Schools

When I decided to make reading and writing central to my teaching in my elementary-level ESL pull-out classes, I was faced with a number of interesting questions and challenges, to which I have been able to work out some solutions.

In my ESL pull-out program I spend approximately 45 minutes, two or three times a week, with my students who are in grades 1-3. I was searching for a thrust, a singular approach to use with these children that would: (1) focus on reading and writing; (2) make the best use of the short time I had with them each session; (3) enhance the learning taking place in their classes; (4) carry over from session to session and provide continuity to a pull-out program; (5) allow me to individualize my teaching; and (6) give us a product so that students could see their own progress. Dialogue journals seemed to be the answer.

To introduce the concept, I simply explained that we were going to "talk on paper." To my surprise, the idea delighted most of them. Certainly none of them had EVER done this before, and they were intrigued. I set the mood for writing by writing in my own journal while they wrote. I told them not to worry about crossing out mistakes, and showed them where I had crossed out my own. We used an assortment of different colored pens so we could write and draw, rather than the large primary pencils used in their classes.

I soon discovered that I had a lot to learn about writing with these kids. I realized the close contact between us (my classes are typically small--4-6 students) made it easier for us to talk than to write. To give these very young students the idea of a written dialogue, we started by writing everything to each other--if they had a question, they wrote it, and I did the same. Sometimes we talked to clarify what one of us had written. I would ask them to read me what they wrote or I would read them what I wrote so that they were not frustrated by their inability to decode the words. To my surprise, even the poorest readers were soon able to read much of my writing and our need to talk during writing decreased. We are now working into having a set time for writing, and I have set aside around 15 minutes of our 45 minutes together during which they write to me.

What would these young students find to write about? In general they write about what is happening to them or what is going o in class. If we have done something like make cranberry sauce for Thanksgiving, we us that as a topic for our journals. I have also encouraged them to write about the stories I read to them. The few minutes we spend together walking from their regular classroom to my small room is also very important as a time to explore together possible writing topics.

Learning how to respond to my students' writing has also been a challenge. At first I asked question after question, trying to help them write. I soon discovered that if I asked a question, the chances of getting a short-answer (even one word) response were about 95%. So instead I tried to comment on something they had said and say something about myself that related to what they had written, as in this example:

Student: *mi planinto hot*
I get tv in my ronm
(my planet [country] is hot too
I have a TV in my room.)

Teacher: *You are lucky. You have a TV in your room. That's nice. Is it a color TV? I have a color TV in my kitchen. I like to watch the news on it.*

Reviewing our entries from time to time with each child has been helpful. Both of us have been able to see growth and accomplishments, even in the brief few months of writing. One particularly striking example of growth is a little first grader, Juanito. When we first started the dialogue journals I discovered that he could not even begin to sound out a three-letter word. What could I do in writing and reading with him? The day I brought his journal to him we began to talk about the fatigue pants he often wore to school. He told me he wanted to be a soldier someday and I asked if he'd like to write "soldier." This single word, which I spelled and wrote on another piece of paper for him, was his first journal entry. His second entry, several days later, was simply "Soldier I like."

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For the next several sessions Juanito asked me to spell all of his words. He wanted the names of favorite TV stars--He Man, Wallycat, and Voltron. We'd talk and he'd draw and label his drawings while I patiently spelled the words. He also began to recognize and respond to certain written commands, such as "Draw a Voltron" or "Draw the school." He was being instructed in reading by his first grade teacher, so he'd often use the journal to list new words he'd learned in class. I kept abreast of the reading vocabulary he was practicing in class and tried to use as much of that list as possible in my entries. I felt good about being able to provide instant feedback to Juanito as he drew, read, and wrote in his journal.

Now, four months later, there has been exciting progress with Juanito. He and his ESL group are writing complete sentences in their journals, asking questions, resourcing each other on spelling and the meaning of words, and even getting so involved in this literacy event that they go to the blackboard and teach each other words. All of them are improving in their ability to decode what I write. It's hard to believe that we are really communicating now in two- and three-sentence paragraphs.

Our successes and enthusiasm are not limited to the walls of my classroom. Some kids now report to me that they are writing outside of class as well. A few are doing so well in the classes where they were previously lagging far behind that their teachers now feel they no longer need the pull-out program.

The experience of using dialogue journals with my pull-out ESL classes has convinced me that these written conversations are helping students to grow rapidly in their ability to communicate in English. I also believe they are developing an awareness of the interdependence of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. In the small, pull-out group, where the teacher is more accessible, they are eager to have the chance to display and practice literacy skills they are learning in their regular classes. Most important, these students are enjoying learning English and are becoming more self-confident with their use of English each day. And their journals contain a permanent record of that growth. •

Using Dialogue Journals to Develop a Discourse-Based Performance Measure

- Shelley Gutstein, Georgetown University

When we write dialogue journals with our students, our primary goal is to communicate with them, to break down social and cultural barriers, and to build positive, supportive relationships. At least on the surface, our goals have not included improving their communicative ability in English. Yet many of us have observed, albeit impressionalistically, growth and development in students' comunicative ability reflected in their dialogue journal writing.

In my study of the dialogue journals of 18 university-level Japanese students of ESL, I am documenting just such development. Using communicative competence theory as my framework, I am examining two interrelated aspects of what I define as communicative competence in dialogue journal writing: a writer's manipulation of topic and topic elaboration.

I base my definition of communicative competence in dialogue journal writing on the discussion of fluency by Fillmore (1979), which I reviewed in a previous newsletter (Gutstein, 1983). Communicative competence in dialogue journal writing is a composite of abilities having at least four components, following Fillmore's criteria. These are: the ability to write fluidly and easily; the ability to write coherently and meaningfully; the ability to write purposively; and the ability to use language creatively, to joke or play with language.

While communicative competence is an elusive phenomenon in any context, some of its attributes can be linked to measurable characteristics in dialogue journal writing. One such attribute, the purposive use of language, can be further defined as the ability to use language appropriately in a wide range of contexts. This functional use of language includes the ability to inform, apologize, thank, etc. (Shuy, 1982). It also includes a content-related parameter, which is the ability to know what to say; i.e., what topics are appropriate, how to initiate them into the discourse, and under what circumstances to continue or pursue them. A discourse progresses, halts or

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stumbles based on how its interlocutors manage its topics--what topics are brought up, what is said about them, how much is said about them, and for how long.

Following and expanding upon methodologies used by Staton and Kreeft (1982), and by Keenan and Schieffelin (1976), I am conducting an analysis of discourse topic in the dialogue journals of my students. I am examining four aspects of topic treatment: topic initiation--which writer introduces topics and how often; topic continuation--which of the topics are continued and for how many turns; what I am calling topic domain--the content areas into which the topics fall; and topic-specific elaboration --the amount of new information provided about a given topic.

I am analyzing the results for patterns of topic treatment to see what they reveal about differences in communicative ability among students. I will also determine what relationship, if any, exists between my measures of communicative competence and "traditional" measures of student ability, beginning with a standardized English proficiency test and student grade point averages.

It is my hope that my research will serve to further document and substantiate what dialogue journal teachers have known all along: that writing dialogue journals helps to develop students' communicative ability. ●

References

Gutstein, Shelley P. 1983. Research issues: elusive definitions. *Dialogue*. (1), 4.

Keenan, Elinor and Bambi Schieffelin. 1976. Topic as a discourse notion: a study of topic in the conversations of children and adults." In: *Subject and Topic.* Charles Li, ed. New York: Academic Press. Pp. 337-384.

Shuy, Roger W. 1982. Analysis of language functions in dialogue journal writing. In: Staton, Shuy, Kreeft and Reed. *Analysis of Dialogue Journal Writing as a Communicative Event*. NIE-G-80-0122. Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics.

Staton, Jana and Joy Kreeft. 1982. Topics: what do they write about? In: Staton, Shuy, Kreeft and Reed. Op cit.

Dissertation Review

Robby Morroy. 1985. Teacher strategies: Linguistic devices for sustaining interaction in dialogue journal writing. Ph.D. dissertation, Georgetown University. (Will be available through University Microfilms.)

This study describes the strategies used by one teacher in dialogue journals with sixth-grade nonnative English speakers and measures their relative effectiveness to achieve her goal of increasing student communication. Although writing in dialogue journals is mandatory in this teacher's class (students are required to write three sentences a day), communication--i.e., writing a message that is meaningful to a reader--does not necessarily result. Simply getting students to write in their journals every day is definitely no guarantee that they will choose to communicate. The strategies that the teacher employs in the journals are therefore necessary tools for promoting communication.

The data for this study are the dialogue journals of ten sixth-grade students, all nonnative English speakers. Some had been in the U.S. for less than one year; others had spent at least five years in U.S. schools. The various strategies that the teacher used to promote communication were identified, and their effectiveness measured in terms of four characteristics of the students' writing: student response rate, degree of elaboration in student responses, syntactic complexity, and cohesiveness of responses. Most of the strategies were found to be variably effective by all four measures. Among the strategies found to be consistently effective across all students and across the three time periods sampled were: acknowledging and restating the student's topic, giving information, requesting information, expressing solidarity, suggesting, noticing something about the student, and asking for an opinion.

Many other strategies were also very effective for some students or at one period of the year, and not others. Morroy's findings stress that the essential value of the dialogue journal is its inherent variability and adaptability of teachers' responses to individual students' needs. ●

Recent Dialogue Journal Publications

Curtis, W. Hayes and Robert Bahruth. 1985. Querer es poder. In Hansen, Newkirk and Graves, eds. *Breaking Ground: Teachers Relate Reading and Writing in the Elementary School.* Portsmouth: Heinemann.

Debra Popkin. 1985. Dialogue journals: A way to personalize communication in a foreign language. *Foreign Language Annals.* (18), 2. 153-156.

Jana Staton. The power of responding by using dialogue journals. In Toby Fulwiler, ed. *The Journal Book.* Boynton/Cooke. Forthcoming.

NOTES FROM THE FIELD

Dialogue Journals in Nurses' Training

In your May 1985 issue of *Dialogue* [on DJs in higher education] you requested information about what your readers are doing with dialogue journals. As a Professor in Nursing Education at Howard Community College I was eager to incorporate journal writing into the Nursing Program. Nurse educators have typically documented observations regarding a student's behavior in the clinical area in the form of an anecdotal note. The vehicle of anecdotal notes was recently expanded to include the student's perceptions of a particular clinical day. Faculty then react to the student's reflective thoughts, and thus the previously one-way communication of an anecdotal record now comes close to a two-way dialogue journal.

We introduce the process with a written explanation, and encourage students to reflect on clinical experiences which were meaningful as well as to critique their own performance and share concerns and feelings of accomplishment. Although we impose some structure on what is to be written, the process meets the conditions for a dialogue journal in many ways. The exchange of journals occurs twice a week for several weeks, *with both parties providing and seeking* information and both parties equally engaged in the interaction. The student's communication often entails an indirect question which seeks to elicit faculty comment or feedback. Faculty are more likely to ask direct questions to stimulate a student to think critically or to clarify the communication.

In writing the explanation for the anecdotal/dialogue record, I was keenly aware of the dilemma of combining a dialogue journal format, which strives to promote understanding, with a record to communicate critical analysis of student behavior. However, I am convinced that we have achieved an effective mix. Students primarily describe clinical activities in which they are involved, and faculty react to the students' observed behavior and written descriptions, a legitimate exchange because students need to receive feedback on their performance. At the same time, the additional focus on perceptions and meaningful experiences assures that a nonjudgmental exchange is achieved.

-Emily Slunt, Professor of Nursing
Howard Community College, Columbia, MD

* * * *

In Elementary School

I teach fifth grade "core" (English and social studies) classes at the Berkeley-Carroll Street School in Brooklyn, N.Y. I have found that some of the best communication I have with my students is through their journals. Though this does not happen every time, by any means, the "intimate distance" which can be created in this form of communication is invaluable in opening people to each other and to themselves.

-Betsy Devlin-Foltz
Brooklyn, NY

* * * *

In Teaching Adult ESOL

The use of dialogue journals is now a recommended practice in the new study guide for teaching adult ESOL in the Montgomery County Public Schools:

> *There has been an increased awareness of the need for all ESOL students to write more effectively in their second language. With this in mind, dialogue journals are encouraged for upper beginning, intermediate, and advanced students. Entries are initiated by the student, minimal corrections are provided by the instructor, and an ongoing, spontaneous "dialogue" is sustained with the student throughout the course.*

From *Study Guide for Teaching English to Adult Speakers of Other Languages*, Montgomery County Public Schools, Dept. of Adult Education, 1985.

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With Autistic and Learning-Disabled Students

Terry Shepherd, associate professor in the Department of Curriculum, Instruction and Media, Southern Illinois University in Carbondale, has an autistic son, Mark, who is now 19. For years he and his wife have corresponded daily with the teachers and aides at Mark's school. Mark carries a note each morning from his parents telling about activities of the evening before, for use in oral language lessons, writing, reading, etc. In the afternoon the teacher or aide writes a note back, telling of past and future school events so the parents may discuss them with Mark and assure that the information is being correctly processed. In the past few years, Mark has been opening the letters on his way to or from school, and has been able to write his own "experience stories" about home or school events, thus participating in the dialogue.

Dr. Shepherd has observed that writing has been an essential part of Mark's oral language development. Mark's first really spontaneous, self-generated comment at age eight (for years Mark only echoed what others said, one symptom of autism) came after a fuss with his sister. He retreated to the family room and wrote on the chalkboard there:

IATEDADDYSCRTSANDSUSANPUNCHEDMEINTHESTOMAK
("I ate Daddy's Certs and Susan punched me in the stomach")

Then he came upstairs and said it. It was as if the writing "released" the language so Mark could say it! Even recently, Dr. Shepherd observed Mark writing something in church. Mark didn't show him the writing, but casual glances at it allowed him to decipher: "I was good and I didn't make noises or stick out my tongue on the day before I went to my first computer lesson." Again, this writing seemed to be a rehearsal for speaking.

Writing notes to each other is now an essential part of life in the Shepherd household. At one point in Mark's life it was impossible for him to grasp an idea (like when his next haircut was) when only presented orally; it *had* to be written. Then he could process and remember the information.

Excerpted from: T.R. Shepherd, "Using experience language to teach an autistic-like child with a visual disorder to read (and write and talk). Sept., 1984. ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 243 289; and a recent letter from Dr. Shepherd. ●

Jack Farley recently completed his dissertation (Univ. of Cincinnati), a topic analysis of the DJs he kept with his class of mentally retarded adults (the abstract is in the *Back Issues* volume). Jack is now at Murray State University, and analyzing the DJ writing of multiply impaired (hearing impairedcerebral palsied-mentally retarded) students. He writes:

> I find that for students who have a hearing impairment (which affects oral language development) and cerebral palsey (which affects both oral musculature and manual production), dialogue journals may be used as an augumentative communication system. Although these students may not be able to produce completely legible written language, their written efforts may augment their limited sign productions and unintelligible speech.
>
> I am also keeping DJs with preservice teachers who will be working with handicapped students in mainstream settings. I advocate that regular educators maintain dialogue journals with their mainstreamed handicapped students to keep the lines of communication open.
>
> -Jack W. Farley, Murray State Univ.

* * * *

Dialogue Journals at Home

This comes from Terry Shepherd again--concerning parents writing dialogues with their children about events, desires, "troubled waters," etc.

DASU (*DA*ddy and *SU*san) was born in 1979. My daughter Susan and I developed a neat written communication folder during the time of my father's hospitalization and subsequent death. This was a time when I was away from home visiting my parents, over a hundred miles away. DASU was our way of maintaining communication in absentia. It was written in and left where the writer next expected the reader to be (at the reader's spot at the breakfast table or on his/her pillow, for example). It was special because of the stress and emotion and need of the hour. Since that time, we have pretty much continued this writing, now in the form of letters. Susan now has a homemade mailbox by her door. She usually

(Continued on p. 11)

(Continued from p. 10)

leaves my letters on my dresser top near my glasses.

Excerpted from: T.R. Shepherd, "Using experience language with atypical learners." Presented at the National Reading and Language Arts Educators' Conference, Sept., 1985; and from a recent letter from Dr. Shepherd.

* * * *

Taking the "Bite" out of Blue Books

Trudith Smoke, ESL coordinator for the Department of Academic Skills at Hunter College in New York City, started using "blue books" (you know them--those little exam booklets) as dialogue journals with her students, because they were so easy to carry. She found that after using the blue books for dialogue journal writing, students are now not intimidated by them when they do use them to write exams.

* * * *

FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS

Teaching EFL in Japan

I'm just beginning to try out dialogue journals with my students. They're blue collar workers, and they were, by necessity, "failures" in the Japanese academic system. They are also in general very bright and enthusiastic. Their first entries in our journals were pretty difficult to understand, but now that I've gotten across the idea that this is supposed to be a dialogue (and that they should therefore read my responses), we are holding conversations. They really have trouble following what I write, but they ask each other for help a lot, and ask me to explain occasionally. It is fun watching them try out the grammatical structures they are learning, sometimes appropriately, so that the journals really become a balance for the "learning" part of the lesson. Last night was pretty wild with everyone consulting everyone else or me, and also sharing the replies they had received. I have to be more careful about my (illegible) handwriting.

-Madeline Adkins,
National Language Laboratory School
Hyogo-ken, Japan

* * * *

Teaching Deaf High School Students in Australia

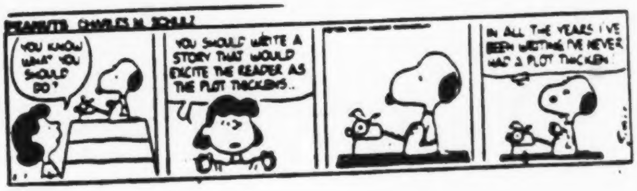
We are nearing the end of our school year, and I'm seeing the benefits now of using journals with my students. I often wonder if the time I spend on journals could be better spent on preparing lessons but at the same time I enjoy the relationship that builds up over the year. I've decided I'll write journals again with my students next year. I look forward to receiving your next issue of "Dialogue."

-Elizabeth Turner
South Australia

* * * *

Research Note

Mary Maguire, associate professor at McGill University, has just received a research grant to study dialogue journal writing in a first grade classroom in Montreal, Quebec. The children in the study are learning English and French as second and third languages, and their written products will be analyzed.


PEANUTS CHARLES M. SCHULZ
YOU KNOW WHAT YOU SHOULD DO?
YOU SHOULD WRITE A STORY THAT WOULD EXCITE THE READER AS THE PLOT THICKENS..
IN ALL THE YEARS I'VE BEEN WRITING I'VE NEVER HAD A PLOT THICKEN!

NEXT ISSUE: Dialogue Journals for Developing Literacy in Refugee, Migrant, and Adult Basic Education

Dialogue journals have proved effective beyond our expectations for promoting literacy development, and are adaptable to many different situations where students are in the process of acquiring literacy in English. Our summer issue will feature an article by Curtis Hayes, Carolyn Kessler (U. of Texas at San Antonio), and Robert Bahruth (fifth grade teacher), who describe how a class of fifth grade migrant children grow from displaying little or no writing ability to being prolific readers and writers. Another article will report on work with adult basic education students at the Refugee Education and Employment Program in Arlington, VA. We also hope to have articles discussing literacy work in the refugee camps in the Philippines and Thailand. In addition, Carol Urzua, a featured speaker at TESOL '86, will discuss the ways that children learning ESL understand audience, ing, and this year's TESOL presentations and dialogue journal writing will be reviewed. WATCH FOR THE SUMMER ISSUE!

Future Issues:
- Focus on the Teacher: Benefits, Strategies, Problems, Etc.
- Dialogue Journal Communication for Personal Growth--focusing on aspects of student self-concept, attitudes, and cultural values

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☐ **Enclosed also is $5 for the Back Issues of Dialogue including a history of dialogue journal use, publications list, and dissertation abstracts.**

DIALOGUE is the newsletter about the uses, benefits, and theory of dialogue journals, a practice of communicating in writing about topics of mutual interest through continuous, functional conversations between (usually) learners and teachers. This newsletter provides an informal means of sharing information, ideas and concerns among those who have begun using dialogue journals in the United States and in other countries. It is an outgrowth of a National Institute of Education research grant to describe and analyze the purposes, structure and benefits of dialogue journal communication (Analysis of Dialogue Journal Writing as a Communicative Event, Center for Applied Linguistics, 1982). For more information about research and practical applications, please write Jana Staton, c/o Center for Applied Linguistics, 1118 - 22nd Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20037.

DIALOGUE appears approximately three times a year, at a cost of $3.00 to cover duplication and mailing. A volume of back issues is available for $5.00. Make checks payable to Handbook Press.

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Dialogue

September, 1986

Editors: Jana Staton
Joy Kreeft Peyton
Shelley Gutstein

DIALOGUE JOURNALS FOR DEVELOPING LITERACY IN REFUGEE, MIGRANT, AND ADULT BASIC EDUCATION

Possibly the most important factors influencing literacy development, apart from a general orientation to print and mastery of basic literacy skills of letter and word formation and recognition, are the student's sense of ownership of the reading/writing experience--the feeling that reading and writing are a vital, meaningful part of one's life and a valuable way of expressing oneself --and sense of cooperation--the knowledge that one is not left alone in the endeavor, but communicating with someone who wants to communicate with them. In our society, lack of literacy skills is not simply a matter of lack of schooling or mastery of basic skills. In fact many semi-literates in the United States have said in interviews that they attended school through high school, but they never felt that reading and writing had anything to do with them and their interests and concerns. They felt as if they were on the outside looking in on an experience that must be relevant for others, but not for them; they never claimed reading and writing as part of their lives. When the language used for reading and writing is not the native language of the learner, the feeling of separation and eventual frustration is compounded.

The articles in this issue give us a broad view of different situations in which dialogue journals are being used with non-native English speakers to build a sense of ownership and cooperation and to provide an entree into the world of literacy. In Carole Urzúa's article, which opens this issue, we see young students realize that "someone is out there," as they develop a knowledge of audience and a sense of cooperating with an audience in written dialogue. Larry, a child of migrant workers who has had little exposure to English or print (Hayes, Bahruth & Kessler), seems to burst forth from a very well-established cocoon of non-writing when he finally takes ownership of his reading and writing, realizing that he can write and likes to.

In a program for semi-literate adults at the Spanish Education Development Center (Hester), students are involved in a variety of highly structured, teacher-guided writing activities to develop basic literacy skills. For them, the dialogue journal provides the one place where they can break away from these prescribed patterns and create something themselves in writing. Leslee Reed also describes how interactive writing with the teacher can help students to break away from frozen language patterns into more creative language use. In a Cultural Orientation class for adults in a refugee camp in Thailand (Johnson) written dialogue with their American teacher enables students to work with her to begin to make sense of how they might integrate their past traditions and customs into the new life they face in the United States.

In each situation, we see students who are at some stage in the development of basic literacy skills, but in each we see also the crucial role that ownership and cooperation play in the overall development of literacy.●

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"How is your weekend what did you do": Second Language Learners' Understanding of Audience

- Carole Urzúa, University of the Pacific

According to Graves, the question of "Why write?" begins to arise when children have been actively writing for two or three years, "when writers first gain a sense of audience" (1983:268). But what about children learning English as a second language? Do they also begin to sense the demands of an audience when they have been learning literacy for this length of time? In what ways do they understand how audiences can work for them?

I recently became acquainted with four Southeast Asian children to search out answers to these questions; two were fourth grade Cambodian girls and two were sixth grade boys, one Cambodian and one Laotian. They had all been in the United States about two years; none of the children had had previous literacy experience in their native language.

The children engaged in weekly writing workshops, helping one another through peer interaction to communicate their intended messages. In addition, they wrote dialogue journals with my colleage, Sue Braithwaite, an ESL supervisor, sending them twice a week through the district mail.

One of the most dramatic areas of growth for the children in the writing workshops was their awareness of revision needs, largely because they trusted that their friends truly wanted to know what they knew. (See Urzúa, 1985, for an extended discussion.) Also, while not engaging in revision in their dialogue journals, the children nevertheless demonstrated that they had begun to care about their audience. In various ways, they acknowledged 1) that some-one else was interested in what they knew; 2) that they were interested in what someone else knew; and 3) that they were interacting with a specific person.

Acknowledgement of others' interest. The children had varying strategies for acknowledging that someone else was interested in what they knew. It took Vuong, one of the boys, the longest to indicate that he was aware of the conversational tone of the journals. For almost two months, he wrote about his weekend: he got up, washed his face, did the laundry, occasionally watched football, and went to bed! Taking cues from his initiations, Sue plied him with questions such as what his favorite football team was. But Vuong never varied from his format. Finally in frustration, Sue asked him about his expertise in learning to play the violin. What was his favorite piece? In the first entry which acknowledged the presence of an interactant, Vuong answered that his favorite piece was Lightly Row. This breakthrough occurred about the same time as a major revision in another piece of writing; until this time, Vuong's revision strategy had been to make his piece look prettier, laboriously copying the same words, one word at a time, onto a new page. Clearly, he had begun to take his reader into account.

The other children had other strategies for acknowledging this audience interest. One of the girls would answer any questions posed by Sue on the same line; the other girl would take the questions and compose a paragraph, consisting solely of answers!

Acknowledgement of their interest in others. Some of the children were well aware of the interactive nature of the journals; one of the children asked, perhaps rhetorically, "Now what should we talk about?," and then nominated his own topic, skiing. But again it was Vuong who took the longest to indicate that he was interested in his audience. A week after he answered the questions about the violin piece, Vuong initiated the topic of going fishing, which was extended over three entries. In the third entry, he discussed catching fish on the coast, and then ended, "How is your weekend what did you do." The first tentative question! Still no question mark, but obvious interest in his partner. In the subsequent weeks, he continued to pose this same question; he never asked about anything else. Sue continued to fill him in on her family's weekend activities.

Acknowledgement of interacting with a specific person. As with children writing in their first language, our children became close to Sue, and discussed many personal issues. One of the girls, for example, nearly always wrote letters beginning, "Dear Mrs. Braithwaite." In one particularly poignant entry, she revealed the extent to which she recognized that she was writing not just to any audience, but to a trusted friend.

> *Dear Mrs. Braithwaite,*
> *Can I ask you a question?*
> *I feel sad because everytimes*
> *you ~~mailed~~ my journal back I*
> *always saw a different folders.*

(Continued on p. 3)

(Continued from p. 2)

> *When I took that folder home I always saw it riped. Why are you always changed those folders? Well, I don't mean that I don't like that folder. Everytimes those folder on my desk, everyone start teasing me. I always turned red, you know that I'm the shyest girl. They always said "what a beautiful," but it's mean a opposite word. Well see you on Thursday.*

The sensitive "audience" bought new folders for all the writers!

With these data from only four ESL children, it is not possible to say whether Graves' timeline for native language writers is the same as that for second language learners. However, it is evident that second language children can participate in the same powerful use of language as other children, and that they do come to recognize the importance of their readers. Dialogue journals are one of the ways in which this is facilitated. ●

Reference

Urzúa, C. "You stopped too soon": Composing in young L2 learners. Paper presented at the annual meeting of TESOL, New York, 1985.

Recent Dialogue Journal Publications

Johnson, Kirsten. 1986. Using dialogue journals for a more meaningful cultural orientation class. Passage: A Journal of Refugee Education. Vol. 2, No. 2. Summer 1986. Pp. 67-70.

Sayers, Dennis. 1986. Sending messages: across the classroom and around the world. TESOL Newsletter. Supplement on computer-assisted language learning. Vol. 20. No. 1. Pp. 7 and 8.

Sayers, Dennis. 1986. Dialogue journals: A literary "close encounter" of the first kind. Correspondent. Vol. 2. No. 2. Pp. 4 and 5. New England Bilingual Education Multifunctional Support Center.

The Dialogue Journal and Migrant Education

Curtis W. Hayes, Robert Bahruth, &
Carolyn Kessler
Universities of Texas at San Antonio and Austin

Larry Reyes entered the fifth grade in August 1983, already branded a failure. Larry, son of migrant farm workers, unable to read materials at his own grade level, unable to write, was typical of his classmates. All were Spanish language dominant; all were limited in English proficiency (LEP); and all, unless a turnaround occurred, would continue to fail in school, and failure would quite likely lead, if history is a guide, to their dropping out of school, most by the seventh grade. Some would remain until the 9th or 10th grade before leaving to work in the fields for low wages, accompanying their parents from one region to another, from one maturing crop to the next. Very few would stay to graduate from high school.

In August, charged with the education of twenty-two children, all reading below grade norms (among whom was Larry) and some unable to read at all, we began. We began during those warm days of August by asking the children to write to us and we would respond--write about anything, we said, and don't worry about spelling or punctuation, we added. Just write, but write at least three lines about a topic you're interested in. That is how we initiated the dialogue journal for a group of LEP students who were experiencing extreme difficulties in reading and writing English.

Most children responded, some reluctantly, and the next day turned in three lines--all except Larry, who submitted a blank sheet. Robert, his teacher, responded in the journal by asking, "How can I answer you if you don't write to me?" The next day, Larry wrote (all journal entries are unedited for spelling and punctuation): "I like math because I can count by five and tens. I like to write about Bo & Be & I like to draw the pictures & write the...." His words then trailed off, reflecting the years that Larry had spent in school learning little of what it would take to succeed. But Robert responded:

> I Enjoy writing too I also enjoy illustrating my stories when I finish. I also use pictures for ideas to write about. What problems bother you about writing?

(Continued on p. 4)

(Continued from p. 3)

Larry candidly answered:

Well I can't not spell right. Thats what's bother me about writing,

After that first week, those initial, halting days, Larry was off. His entries lengthened, and his topics included: what he had been reading, his dislikes and likes, football games he attended and sandlot games he participated in, games he played ("mardles"), poems he particularly liked, his best friends and their activities together, arranging games with his teacher (a football game on Sunday). He even began to pose questions--"have you play football wind you were little with anther kids?"--and answer questions from his teacher: "Would you like to learn to play chess?" Larry responded:

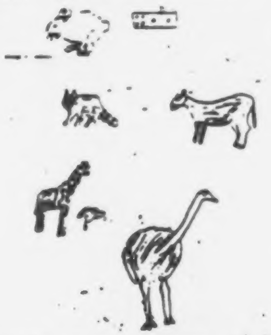
> *I taught that chess was lik checkers. But I no how to play checkers a lot. Have you play checkers & chinese checkers?*

Larry periodically returned to his favorite topic, the one he knew most about: "I went to the football field the Sunday that pass."

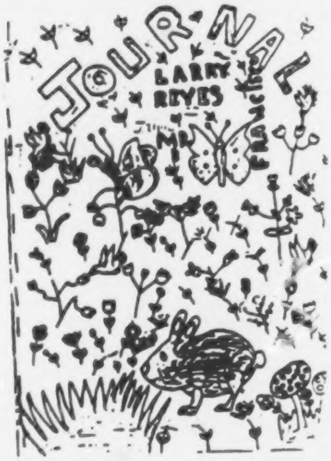
Eventually, as he became more comfortable, confident and secure with his writing, he began to write about his future:

> *I'm saying to my mom that I'm going to finish school and I am golling to college and study for a year and try for teacher because I like being a teacher.*

We also required our children to make covers for their journals. This is Larry's first cover.



Once he had filled the pages of his first journal, Larry asked whether he could begin another: "I like to make another Journal but this time I will make the cover of the Journal pretty not like this Journal." He then added, "do you remeber the frist day I didn't write guess like one line, I like writeing in my Journal." And the effect that writing to his teacher and receiving responses had on Larry is seen on his elaborate second cover.



The children wrote and read extensively throughout that year. By May, when they were already leaving for the fields, they had "published" twenty-two books consisting of their writings (Hayes and Bahruth 1985), in addition to writing daily in their journals.

In August we had pre-tested our children, in January we again assessed, and in May we post-tested. Growth in reading comprehension as indicated on the standardized assessment instrument employed by the school district revealed an average gain per child of three years. Those who were not reading or writing at all in August were now participants in May--they could read and write.

The key to any success we had, of course, is no secret. We began with the dialogue journal (DJ), which we refer to now as our "catalytic converter." It converted our children into writers and readers. We believe it led to writing for a number of reasons: it was not graded; there were no right or wrong answers so there was no risk; it was private and consisted of a friendly conversation between two people genuinely interested in one another; there was no fear of ridicule; and it was fun. All of us looked forward with anticipation to see what the other had written. Additionally, the DJ consisted of child-initiated topics. Children could ask for and receive clarification on class assignments. Children could ask for additional examples (i.e., math problems). Most

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important, the DJ provided daily feedback in language that children could understand, and a daily reading lesson. And the kind of expressive writing that our children did quite naturally led to the kinds of transactional writing activities that are so important for school success, the writing that is done in the content or academic areas.

From this one classroom filled with Larrys, we have this past year introduced the dialogue journal in a school whose students do not fare well in the reading and writing tasks assigned by the teacher. Eighty-five percent of the children in grades K-5 in this school are second language learners of English, all LEP. We have found that these children, once they discover they will not be "hammered" (a word employed by one student) for any infelicitous sentence or phrase, for misspelled words or inappropriate punctuation, will not only write but they will enjoy writing and they will improve in their use of the written language, both in terms of content and of form. We who direct and teach in the TESL preparation program for teachers and prospective teachers of LEP students recommend highly to our own students that they consider the benefits of using the DJ in their own language arts program. We employ a DJ with them, and we demonstrate by our use that we value writing in our own lives. ●

Reference

Hayes, Curtis W. and Robert Bahruth. 1985. Querer es poder. In Breaking Ground, Jane Hansen, Thomas Newkirk, and Donald Graves (Eds.). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann Educational Books, 98-107.

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Dialogue Journal Communication: Classroom, Linguistic, Social, and Cognitive Views, Jana Staton, Roger Shuy, Joy Kreeft Peyton, and Leslee Reed, is now at ABLEX, to appear in Marcia Farr's Writing Research Series. This is a much improved version of the first NIE report (Staton, et al, 1982), with readable charts and lots of examples.

We expect it to come out the end of 1986, and hope to make a prepublication offer to our newsletter subscribers, which should whittle the cost down somewhat. You may want to write for the brochure describing this book and the entire Writing Research Series.

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Features of Semi-literate Writing: One Student's Development

- Julietta Hester,
Spanish Education Development Center

At the Spanish Education Development (SED) Center in Washington, DC, where I am an ESL instructor in the Adult Education Program, around 40% of our students are semi-literate; that is, they know that letters and words on paper have meaning, although they may not always be able to decipher them. Half of the ESL students have had less than six years of formal schooling in their home countries. Their literacy level in Spanish is often low, resulting in reading and writing difficulties in English.

In working on writing with these students, we give them controlled activities to develop their letter and word formation, which they haven't always mastered, as well as opportunities to express themselves fluently in writing in more extended text. Moving along a continuum from controlled to free-writing activities, we work on four types of writing: discrete item activities, controlled compositions, paragraphs, and dialogue journals.

Students do discrete-item activities such as punctuation and spelling exercises and writing letters in print and cursive form to become aware of new writing features, practice them, and add them to their repertoire of writing skills. In controlled compositions, which consist of following a model and altering parts of it, they work on these same skills in the context of longer text. Paragraph writing is an opportunity for students to use what they have learned in semi-controlled writing to express ideas of their own. Finally, dialogue journals are the freest type of writing that students do, because neither the topic nor structure is controlled. A student may choose to write about any subject and in any form in the dialogue journals. It is our belief that utilizing these four types of writing in the classroom will provide a bridge from learned items to free expression in writing.

Curious about changes that might occur over time in students' free-writing, I decided to study the dialogue journals of Maruja Bacilio, a student from Peru who has been studying at SED Center for over a year. Looking through early entries, I noticed four

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features that were prominent in the beginning stages of her dialogue journal writing, features which are easily quantifiable and are common to our students with formal education deficits:

1. "Pause points." These are small dots that appear between words and in the middle of a line when students rest their pencils after laboriously writing a word. They are steps in the evolution of punctuation, often appearing where commas or other internal punctuation will be in later writing.

2. Interchanged capital and small letters. Capital and small letters are interspersed throughout sentences and even within individual words. These errors are among a series of changes that take place in the writing of semi-literate students on the letter level.

3. Use of both printing and cursive writing. Printing and cursive writing are used interchangeably within a sentence and within a word. Errors of this kind are among many changes that occur over time on the word level.

4. Unnecessary connection or division of words. Individual words are connected or one word is divided into parts. These developmental errors occur along a continuum of changes that take place over time on the word level. For example, beginning nonliterate students often copy words in a single line without any spaces between words. Over time they begin to write words with some spaces in between, and finally, a space between every word.

I followed these features in Maruja's dialogue journal entries rather than in her other writing because this was where she writes regularly and spontaneously, without as much self- or teacher monitoring or correction as in her other writing, providing an indication of development in the freest written context. I compared Maruja's first six consecutive dialogue journal entries from July 1 to August 19, 1985 with her last six consecutive entries from March 20 to April 10, 1986, concentrating on patterns of development in these four areas. I found a remarkable reduction in pause points between the two sets of entries, with 21 out of 328 words in the early set and only eight out of 440 words in the later one. Even though Maruja wrote more in the later sample, she produced only around one-third as many pause points.

Use of capital and small letters also evolved from the first set of entries to the second. While the first set contained 95 examples of incorrectly placed capitals or small letters in the sample of 328 words, the second set contained only half as many errors of this kind--50 in the 440-word sample. Maruja's writing had changed from a jumble of letter types with capital letters in any position in the word, to words made up mostly of small letters placed where they belonged. In the beginning, she always wrote "F" and "K" and usually wrote "T" as capitals. By the last entry the correct use of capital and small forms of these letters had fully developed.

Similar changes took place in Maruja's printing and cursive writing. Oddly enough, she began by using predominantly cursive writing, but, instead of connecting these letters, she left spaces between them in a word, and interspersed a few printed letters throughout. Her last entry was primarily printed, with a few cursive letters sprinkled in. She was experimenting with these two aspects of her writing and opted for printing. Changes back and forth from cursive to printing both on the word and sentence level were still evident in her last entry, but were much less frequent.

The last feature that I examined was the connection of two words into one or the separation of a single word into two. Although this is a typical feature of many of our students' initial writing, few examples occurred in Maruja's journal entries. She separated "same times" (sometimes) and united "ofcurse" (of course) in the first set of entries, and I found very little change in this feature over time, with only scattered examples in the second set.

The four features that I followed in this one student's writing seem to represent points along a continuum of developmental progress in writing. Pause points may be illustrative of punctuation development. The

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interchange of capital and small letters, and the mixing of cursive and printed writing, may represent a stage in the development of letter formation. The inappropriate connection and division of words may represent evolution on a word level. Other features, representative of development of writing on a sentence and discourse level, could also be identified and followed. Those I chose to look at offer educators an easy way to observe the evolution of student writing in dialogue journals.

It is unclear whether all the differences I found in Maruja's writing were due to the many opportunities she had to experiment with writing afforded by the journal, to her examination of her teacher's entries to her, to other class activities, or to a combination of factors.

However, teachers considering using dialogue journals in a adult literacy program may find the results of this effort encouraging. At a minimum, dialogue journal writing appears to provide a context for use of features learned and practiced in more controlled writing exercises. It may also provide a place to acquire new features in an enjoyable and free-writing context.

[The SED Center is a nonprofit, community-based educational organization offering low-cost services to the residents of the predominantly Hispanic neighborhoods of Adams Morgan, Columbia Heights, and Mount Pleasant.] o

Research Report

Jacqui Whisler's master's thesis, "A Dialogue Journal as a Means to Encouraging a Bilingual Student to Write Cohesively" (University of Texas at Arlington, May, 1986), is particularly relevant to the theme of this issue. She compares the dialogue journal writing of one fifth grade student, "Juan," a native Spanish speaker, with his in-class essays, focusing on cohesion. She discusses the role of the dialogue journal in developing use of cohesive devices and audience awareness and in improving Juan's attitude toward writing. She shows that the dialogue journal served as a very important entree to literacy for this student and an important source of information for his teachers about what he was actually able to do in writing. The dialogue journal allowed him an opportunity to write (whereas much of his in-class "writing" involved work sheets and brief exercises), and in it he was able to express himself much more effectively than he could, at that point, in his in-class essays. ●

Using Dialogue Journals for a More Meaningfu Cultural Orientation Class

- Kirsten Johnson, Phanat Nikhom Refugee Camp, Thailand

My coordinator had called the class I was about to teach a "dream class." But when I faced those 28 Laotians on the first day, I had my doubts. I had never taught such a high level before, nor such a large and varied class. This was a cultural orientation (CO) class, and in the 15 weeks before my students left for the U.S., I was expected to communicate a myriad of cultural issues to them. I had some ideas about how to teach these students, how to guide them to teach themselves, and how to assess what they had learned. But how was I to gain insight into their personal thoughts, address individual needs and problems, and encourage them to be open with me? Many of their true feelings would never surface in such a large group. I had to find a way in which they could. I had heard of other classes using dialogue journals and decided to experiment with the tecnnique myself, adapting it to fit my students' needs and my own goals.

When I first introduced the idea of keeping a dialogue journal, my students were somewhat confused. Even though I gave them a long list of ways to communicate--asking questions, making comments on CO lessons, practicing grammar points, writing creatively, or just spilling out anything that was on their minds--they were unsure of what I wanted, having been used to a much more structured educational system in which teachers' expectations were more clearly defined. Finally, I told them that I thought it was important for them to improve their English, whereupon they fell to work. Of course, I wanted to go far beyond improving their writing skills, but my real motives were so vague and complex that I didn't want to burden my students by trying to explain them. Throughout the cycle, I let them discern for themselves what my motives were by what I encouraged them to write about and how I responded to what they had written.

Though my students were free to write what they liked in their journals, many times I gave them structured ideas to focus their attention. I would ask them to relate their writing to what we had been studying in CO class, either through direct commentary, or by answering an open-ended question. Through

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our class discussions and activities, I was able to assess their knowledge of and attitudes toward these issues only to a limited extent and hoped we could explore them further in the journals. I also took particular interest in whether or not the students had other concerns which they might have been too inhibited to express openly. From their journal responses, I would structure in-class activities that would focus on those concerns.

Many of the students voiced fears in their journal entries about losing their traditional culture as they became immersed in a new one. So, in class we discussed the concepts of tradition, civilization, and westernization and how a group of people could be influenced by these. Through our discussion, my students were able to see that one can, in fact, keep one's past alive, and that it is not wrong to merge both cultures. I was glad that I had read their journal entries before the discussion, so that I could refer directly to their concerns. Furthermore, the discussion made more sense to the students than if I had just come in fresh one day with questions about changing traditional culture; our discussion was given another dimension because the students had had an opportunity to think and write about the topic first.

Sometimes the students asked questions about what would be required of them in their new home. Some were simple and straightforward: "Does every person in the U.S. go to the university?" Most, however, were more complex and it took a lot of time and consideration to form a response: "Do the American girls need to get married with Hmong? Or another refugee?" When I responded, I made it clear to the student that I could only write from my own experience or bias; another person might answer very differently. Often the students would make statements such as: "All Americans respect honesty, isn't that right?" Then we had to discuss the issue so they could get a more realistic view. I hoped they realized by the end that there are very few questions that can be answered in a cut-and-dried manner; to generalize and stereotype makes things appear deceptively simple. By the time the cycle was over, I think most of them had realized that in order to learn the truth of any matter, one must explore further.

Because of the Asian tradition of retaining a certain formal distance between teacher and student, I thought when I first began to work with my students that I should not allow myself to get too close. Easy familiarity might dissolve the respect we felt for each other. Still, teachers are human beings and feel a kind of kinship with their students. The teacher cannot show this feeling in an overt way; it must be expressed in subtle ways. I found the journals a good way of building personal relationships with my students. Without having to embarrass ourselves in any way, we could carry on a special relationship through the written word. This did not lessen the respect between us; rather, it heightened it. Because of this bond, my students were more willing to listen to me and give of themselves in the class, and I was more genuinely willing to put as much effort as I could into making it the best CO class that it could be. ●

[This article is excerpted from an article of the same title in Passage, a journal of refugee education, Vol. 2, No. 2 (Summer, 1986).]

The Dialog Maker, El Dialoguista, and Le Dialoguiste

...are interactive word processors that help a teacher create her half of a written conversation--in English, French or Spanish--with many students. Whenever we engage in face-to-face conversation, we signal turn-taking in many ways, but most often by saying something and waiting for a response. With the Dialog Maker, you can write to students and the software will leave "pauses" where they can respond later. Before class, a teacher uses the computer disk to write a string of both GENERAL and PERSONAL messages. Later, one at a time, students "hold up their end of the conversation" on the computer. As soon as a student reacts to the teacher's sequence of messages, the computer prints out a playscript--with the teacher and that student as the principal actors.

Bilingual English-Spanish and English-French versions for Apple II computers, with a User's Guide about the program and dialogue journal writing in general, are available from InterLearn for $49.95 at Box 342, Cardiff-by-the-Sea, CA 92007. Look for an article on these programs in the next issue of Dialogue.

Moving Students from Frozen to More Creative Language Use

- Leslee Reed

In learning a foreign language, familiar language patterns can be vital. Our ESL students often find language patterns helpful early in their learning, because they allow them to produce language with a sense of accomplishment and the secure feeling that they are speaking correctly, feelings so important when one is trying to become proficient in another language.

In reading the dialogue journals of my beginning ESL students, I often see evidence of the reliance on familiar language patterns, which may take several forms. Some students begin with the basic, "What's your name?" and "My name is Mary." From this they may move on to the use of "I like..." patterns--"I like to play ball," "I like you," etc. With beginning students, I accept this as an early stage of their development, and in my responses I attempt to build on the language that is there.

Unfortunately, students can "stall out" on a pattern, and it can become a crutch. Because they are not proficient in English, they may have remained in ESL classes as they moved from one grade to another, where they have been taught and retaught certain fixed phrases and sentences until they are reinforced and almost automatic. They reach a level of certainty with parts of the language that they know, and do not progress beyond that. For example, one student of mine who truly loved writing in his journal would write about some topic and then write the pattern, "I like.... "Do you like...?" If he told me about a game he had played, he ended with, "I liked the game. Do you like the game?" Each day was the same with him, telling me whatever it was he had on his mind and then using the same pattern. For this student, the pattern was very functional--a safe way to end one topic and keep writing until he thought of another topic.

The use of patterns by this student has caused me to rethink my original negative reaction toward the use of patterns and to see that they can be functional at certain steps in literacy development. However, students do need to move out of using fixed language patterns to more creative language use, and I believe that a teacher using dialogue journals can assist in that development. This can be done in several ways--by varying the pattern, by adding details to the original pattern, by changing the order of the patterns, or by introducing new patterns related to new topics--all ways of supplementing or breaking the pattern. When the student writes something like, "I like the game," the teacher might add a detail about the game: "I can see you like the handball game." Time or location could be added: "Yes, you like the game we play at recess" or "You like the game we play with the other class." Revising the statement can also help to change the pattern while using the same, familiar vocabulary: "The handball game is the one you like." With more advanced students, asking "Why?" can encourage them to elaborate and use more creative language; giving them a choice can make understanding and responding simpler: "Why did you like the book? Was it funny? Was it sad?"

Sometimes the teacher may simply want to respond to the student's topic, but use very little of the student's language, as in this response to one of my students:

Student:	*Today I play ball. Tomorrow I play ball. The next day I play ball.*
Teacher:	*Play ball in area 17. Play with the boys and girls of our Room 11.* *Today you read about the days of the week.* *Miss P__ will not be here this week.*

With these beginning students, new elements added to the student's original pattern and new language that is introduced need to be added with meaning and in context, to aid in the student's comprehension.

Dialogue journals are an excellent place to guide students in subtle ways away from frozen, familiar language patterns and to move them along in their language development. Students have time to read, process, and question if they do not understand. They can review what they have read, which reinforces it and helps them to capture and retain new words and patterns. ●

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

Dialogue journal and personal journal writing were well represented at the TESOL Convention in Anaheim, California, in March, with three different sessions.

1. "Perspectives on Journal Writing: Research and Practice"

This day-long colloquium consisted of six papers. Two were about personal journaling, an adaptation of Ira Progoff's Intensive Journal Process:

"A context for collaboration: Teachers and students writing together"
Donna Jurich, San Francisco State Univ.
Lauren Vanett, Alemany Community College

Discusses the way that writing and sharing journal entries along with students changes the teacher's role from simply teacher and evaluator to fellow writer, and also changes basic teacher perceptions about writing.

"The journal as genre"
Tamara Lucas, Stanford University

Discusses personal journal writing as a genre with its own set of conventions. In a class in which personal journal writing is central, students and teacher negotiate and begin to internalize these conventions over time, although they are never articulated as such at the beginning.

Four papers were about dialogue journal writing, with ESL elementary students:

"Dialogue journal writing and the acquisition of English grammatical morphology"
Joy Kreeft Peyton, Center for Applied Linguistics

Shows patterns of grammatical acquisition in the dialogue journal writing of sixth graders, beginning English learners. Although the journals were used strictly for communication with no focus on grammatical accuracy, students demonstrated increased accuracy in the use of certain grammatical forms over a year's time.

and with hearing-impaired students:

"Coherence in deaf students' writing"
John Albertini, National Technical Institute for the Deaf

Shows how students' dialogue journal writing can demonstrate their use of organization and cohesion in written text, and argues that such writing can foster language objectivity and metalinguistic awareness, as a teacher responds both to what a student has said and how it was said, in a conversational context.

"The dialogue journal and reconceived curriculum theory"
Bonnie Meath-Lang, National Technical Institute for the Deaf

Suggests that dialogue journal writing provides a basis for re-examining basic assumptions about the goals of education, the nature of student-teacher relationships, the purpose of writing, and judgments about what constitutes "good" writing.

"Dialogue journals and the interactive teaching of reading"
Margaret Walworth, Gallaudet College

In courses that involve extensive reading, dialogue journal writing provides a forum for determining what schemata students are bringing to the text, for bringing student perceptions more closely in line with the meaning of the text, and for modelling reading strategies and suggesting alternative strategies that students might use.

2. "Reading for Cultural Insights: The Use of the Dialog Journal in the L2 Classroom"
Margaret S. Steffensen, Illinois State University

Can the dialogue journal be used to teach ESL students about American culture and improve their reading and composition skills simultaneously? Steffensen investigates this question in

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an intermediate ESL course at ISU, using a regional novel as the basis for a semester-long dialog about the culture of the Midwest, where the students were studying. Ten undergraduates enrolled in an ESL composition course spent two hours a week reading William Maxwell's So Long, See You Tomorrow and writing about it in their journals. At the end of the week, the journals were collected and Steffensen and a teaching assistant responded to the entries. Later students read and dialogued about Robert B. Parker's Early Autumn, a detective story.

Responses took several different forms. Students' questions, which ranged from the literal to inferential, were answered, and any errors in interpretation of the text addressed. The instructors also asked questions that encouraged the students to compare motivations and actions in the novel to what would be normal and appropriate in their own cultures. By asking students to interpret the behavior of various characters on the basis of American norms, they probed deeper levels of inferencing. Finally, they encouraged students to evaluate characters and to respond affectively to them.

At the end of the semester, students completed a 21-item attitude scale. Their responses indicated that they felt they had gained a number of benefits from the course, including greater cultural insight and improved skill in reading, writing and studying. Responses also showed that they had enjoyed the course. While this method should be studied further, particularly to quantify the gains made in reading and composition, this is an interesting application of the dialog journal that others might want to explore.

3. "Using journals in ESL composition classes"
   Margaret E. Graves, Iowa State University

   We did not get an abstract of this presentation, but it was about dialogue journals. Write to Margaret Graves for details. ●

NOTES FROM THE FIELD

What about keeping a dialogue journal with someone we work with, who is trying to learn English? Rosemarie Hellman, a reading specialist for the Montgomery (Md) County Schools, found her best opportunity to try out the dialogue journal at home rather than at school, with the woman who helps her clean her house once a week. Since Rosemarie is gone most of the time, there is little opportunity for conversation. Those who believe that writing should not, indeed cannot, be acquired apart from acquiring the ability to write with "voice" and personal expression will find this dialogue proof indeed.

Rosemarie writes: "Connie has tried for U.S. citizenship, but has been unable to pass the written test. She works only as a housemaid, and has very little contact with English speakers. Here are the first entries of our dialogue journal; I wrote first after I explained it to her orally."

R: Friday, April 25, 1986

...I told you about how writing to me every week can help your ability to speak English. I would like to try the idea and see if it really works.

Every time you come on Thursday take a few minutes to read my note and write an answer. It is O.K. to ask questions or answer my questions. It is OK to write about what you did when you were little or about something that is important to you. Answer me right below this note and I will write back to you.

C: May 7, 1986

I wake at five oclock but get up at five thorty, I'm gon to bathroom to was may face, wish fres wather and soap, and cleaner may tes and comb may hair and makcap. Wend I look in the miroow a beautiful gairl!? I ask to Conni do you know that beatiful gairl.? I'm take may dres, I'm was go to the kichen and get may breakfast, put in may paket or may purses and get may keys, clos the aparement door, walk to car, and got to may work....

Connie's first entry certainly shows the unfortunate influence of instruction in "how to write," but in the midst of the predictable narration of her day, there is a glimpse of the self ready to burst forth. Any dialogue journal that begins with this kind of open expression, and has a willing listener like Rosemarie as an audience, will not only increase the writer's fluency and coherence but can lead to the kind of competence in using written language as a reflection of ourselves that we all hope for. ●

NEXT ISSUES

* Focus on the Teacher -- Vol. III.4 Winter, 1986

- Benefits
- Problems
- Research Issues

* Classroom Management, Student Attitudes, Behavior, and Self-Concept -- Vol. IV.1 Spring, 1987

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DIALOGUE is the newsletter about the uses, benefits, and theory of dialogue journals, a practice of communicating in writing about topics of mutual interest through continuous, functional conversations between (usually) learners and teachers. This newsletter provides an informal means of sharing information, ideas and concerns among those who are using dialogue journals and studying their uses in the United States and in other countries. It is an outgrowth of two National Institute of Education research grants to study dialogue journal writing with native and non-native English speakers. The newsletter is now produced with partial support from the Center for Language Education and Research (CLEAR), which is funded by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement of the Department of Education. For information about dialogue journal research and practical applications or the work of CLEAR, write: Dialogue, CLEAR, Center for Applied Linguistics, 1118 - 22nd Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20037.

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Dialogue

December, 1986

Editors: Jana Staton
Joy Kreeft Peyton
Shelley Gutstein

FOCUS ON THE TEACHER: BENEFITS, STRATEGIES, TIME

Most of the time we write or talk about dialogue journals only in terms of the benefits students receive. Are dialogue journal teachers by nature that unselfish? It may be time to tell others the truth: We use dialogue journals because they meet our own needs as teachers.

This issue turns to a focus on the teacher. In it, teachers reflect on the reasons why they use dialogue journals and address some of the issues of time and strategies for responding. Contributions from two elementary teachers, Leslee Reed and Mary Austin; two secondary teachers, Cyndy Shelton and Kathy Andersen-Smith; and a principal, Jan Mulvaney, on teacher benefits are complemented by research perspectives from Rob Tierney and Martha Dolly. For teachers who have become computer-dependent, Dennis Sayers describes software which allows a teacher to manage dialogue journals on a single file system.

Getting constant feedback on the effectiveness of teaching in terms of individual student needs is an essential part of staying alive as a teacher. I am convinced that most teacher anxiety and "burnout" come from not knowing if one has been effective or made a difference that day--and having to plan for the next day in spite of the uncertainty. Leslee Reed reminds us that in order to be motivated and open to learning, teachers also need immediate, meaningful feedback about their efforts. Knowing that you can reach each student every day, even the quiet ones, is another way in which a written dialogue reduces teacher anxiety, as both Cyndy Shelton and Kathy Andersen-Smith point out. We're particularly glad to have these two high school teachers discussing why dialogue journals are helpful to them.

Increasingly, methods of discipline place the teacher and student in an adversarial relationship, instead of participating in the shared construction of knowledge. Mary Austin's and Jan Mulvaney's articles suggest that dialogue journals can be a useful alternative to the realpolitik approach to classroom management, even with a very difficult class.

Perhaps the ultimate benefit of dialogue journals for teachers is authenticity. Maxine Greene, in Teacher As Stranger, points out that teachers are frequently addressed as if they "had no life of [their] own, no body and no inwardness...infinitely controlled, technically efficient, impervious to moods." What these articles stress is the opportunity for teachers to speak in their own voices, for self-definition for all the loose ends and doubts and questions which Greene defines as essential for a genuine learning encounter. In the research section, Rob Tierney gives a fascinating account of what happened when he deliberately varied the authenticity of his responses to student teachers, mixing in "glib" comments with personal and reflective ones.

What comes through in each of these articles is the deep satisfaction of teachers who are finding their own needs met in the very process of teaching itself because of dialogue journal use: getting feedback on the effectiveness of teaching, reaching the individual student, managing classes where discipline problems and aggressiveness threaten to eliminate teaching, and exploring their own infinite variety as a model for students to do the same. •

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Yes, Teacher, There Is Hope!

- Mary Austin, Bucknell Elem., Fairfax CPS

"Hope?" Last year, late in November, I was not so sure there was hope, as far as my sixth grade class was concerned.

As a newly hired teacher in Fairfax County, Virginia, I began the year with idealistic, hopeful thoughts and expectations concerning my new position. Surely this county, with its nationwide reputation for outstanding scholarship and exceptional professional working conditions, could have no extreme disciplinary and motivational problems among its students!

This illusion was short-lived. The promise of an outstanding curriculum and working conditions was more than fulfilled, but another kind of reality stomped and screamed through my door with the first bell at the beginning of the school term. The word was out: I was the new teacher and I had to be broken in right. From the very beginning, that was the only objective on which my class could agree.

The catastrophic and completely frustrating composition of this particular class became more painfully apparent to me with each passing day. Several of my students had very domineering, overbearing, even obnoxious personalities. When these students lost their tempers, the remaining students became inarticulate, voiceless, wild-eyed, frightened children. One especially disturbed student could disrupt my entire class for several days. By November, any communication with my class vanished and was replaced with fear and mistrust.

In a neighborhood elementary school such as mine, such students often "pile up" in one classroom--there just aren't enough classes to spread them around! A very supportive, genuinely caring staff, especially my principal and the counseling resource teacher, worked unceasingly with me to alleviate the problems. We held worthwhile conferences with parents and students, but progress was hard to detect. The atmosphere was definitely not conducive to learning, and even the casual observer felt the resentment and a lack of class cohesiveness. [See "A Principal's View of Dialogue Journals," by Jan Mulvaney, this issue.]

One morning, my principal called me into her office with yet another alternative--dialogue journals. She had just learned about their use as a means of personalized communication, and we both grasped this possible solution enthusiastically. At this point, we had simply exhausted so many other alternatives.

Frankly, as my principal (always hopeful by nature) explained this new tactic to me, I felt skepticism creeping in. I realized quickly that dialogue journals would require a total commitment and desire to succeed, and additional time and effort on my part. Would there be the benefits I needed? There seemed to be a glimmer of hope from reports about the effectiveness of dialogue journals for classroom management.

When I introduced dialogue journals to my less-than-receptive class, their first reaction was, "You've got to be kidding, lady!" Some of the more boisterous ones blatantly refused to write. I didn't force the issue. Over eighty per cent of my class wrote to me at the very first opportunity--and within a week or two, the more rebellious ones soon joined in, unwilling to be left out. Oppressed feelings had finally found an acceptable outlet. A few of the most quiet ones just couldn't seem to stop; I was amazed and overjoyed at their openness. I didn't attempt to counsel them, but I did listen and sympathize. The atmosphere in my classroom began to change.

After the novelty of the experience of daily journal writing began to wear off, our correspondence began to decline. A few students wrote the same meaningless message day after day. Responding to them became tedious after some time.

I had to search for new and interesting topics to discuss in my responses. I discovered that my students felt very special if I shared some small area of my personal life with them. Unimportant details about my life became meaningful and consequential if only one student knew about them. I became more personable to my class as a result of this kind of sharing, and we became friends.

Because of the dialogue journals, my quiet students could reveal their fears and resentment of other students. My angry, verbally abusive students could write about their anger rather than scream across the class. Students who were visibly disturbed by my or other teachers' unfair actions could complain and vent their feelings without fear.

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This afforded me the opportunity to explain some adult actions which seemed unjustified at first glance.

As a result of this experience in journal writing, my class eventually began thinking as a class, not merely as individuals striving to meet their own needs. They began to accept each other and actually could laugh together at their own shortcomings and sometimes outrageous behaviors.

Upon reflection, I have concluded that dialogue journals are definitely a benefit for me. They enabled me to understand so much more about my students and the reasons for their actions. By the time the year ended, I felt very close to them. Although many of my non-contract hours were spent writing to my students, I knew something very important was happening each time we corresponded. ●

A Principal's View of Dialogue Journals

- Jan Mulvaney, former Principal,
Bucknell Elementary, Fairfax CPS

"What can I try next? I've tried every teaching, behavioral and classroom management strategy I know and nothing is working with this class! What do you suggest I DO?" If you are a principal, you may have heard these questions recently. If you're a teacher, you may have asked them.

Over the past seven years as I have worked in a variety of support roles to teachers, I have frequently needed another "trick in my bag" to offer teachers as an alternative to use in the daily challenge of meeting the needs of students. At the beginning of last year, I became interested in dialogue journals when I was seeking alternatives to suggest to a teacher whose sixth grade class was presenting unique concerns. [See the article "Yes, Teacher, There Is Hope!," by Mary Austin in this issue.] The traditional techniques and "tried and true strategies" that had always worked for this teacher, or for me, in previous settings were not working!

As I listened to an explanation of how dialogue journals could be used to improve classroom communication, my mind immediately jumped to the possibility of suggesting dialogue journals for this particular classroom, where the need was to create cohesion and some compatibility among the students. I explored the idea with the classroom teacher and our counseling resource teacher, and we decided to order a set of blank journals and begin as soon as they arrived.

From my perspective as a principal, dialogue journals made the major difference for this class. They provided the structure for these benefits to emerge:

- Students began viewing their teacher as a caring individual who was working to support them, instead of as an authority figure trying to control them.
- A respectful rapport and understanding between students was developed.
- Class problems were resolved in a positive way.
- Each student received support in a very personal, positive way.

These classroom benefits brought further positive results; most important were fewer behavioral problems being referred to the office and a positive, confident teacher able to handle a very difficult situation at a high level of professionalism.

Obviously, the teacher of this classroom is due much credit for her openness and willingness to try a new strategy, and for giving her time and energy to respond to each entry. I saw the time she spent as an excellent investment, because it created the improved student behavior which allowed her to do the job she was hired to do--teach!

I have added dialogue journals to my list of alternatives which I can offer teachers when the circumstances, and the individual teacher's needs and personality, seem appropriate. I find it is the kind of viable option which results in positive changes for both teachers and students. ●

The Safety Valve

- Cyndy Shelton
Huntington Park High School, LAUSD

I have been using dialogue journals in my senior high school English classes for the past three years. I do not correct the writing in the journals, but I do give students points for the amount they write; in addition, they may turn them in when they wish, and we do not have a certain amount of time each period for journal writing.

I have found numerous benefits to me, the teacher, that are not per se related to the students' writing improvement. First, I have noticed that I am able to develop a much closer relationship to all of my students than time would permit in the classroom without using the journals. Second, I find that I can use the journals for behavior modification--theirs and mine.

Many of my students are intimidated by me. I'm big, blonde, and brash, and worst of all, I'm loud. While they are often hanging on every word I say, many would die rather than talk to me. However, many of them love "talking" in the journals. Some of them will make a comment in the journal about what went on in class that I know they would not feel comfortable saying out loud.

Some of the students in my fourth period this last semester, for example, loved to goad me into talking about sexism--I had an unusually vehement, macho bunch of senior men in the class.

I found that students who would not join into the discussion would comment on the discussion in their journal entries. The women, who seldom vocally supported my views, would write about their thoughts on the subject. One young woman started to explore her boyfriend's reaction to her working and his double standards. One of the young men who agreed with part of what I had to say continued to try to correct "the errors of my wayward thinking" by quoting other teachers and different material that he was reading.

The second clear benefit to me is that students who are frustrated with me or the class have some place to vent their frustration. The journals are safe. The ones who are upset with me find out quickly that while I usually fight back with them--via the journals--I will not let what they say in the journal affect what I say to them in class.

My seniors must write a term paper which I find as frustrating to teach as they do to learn. Our mutual frustration causes a high stress level during that time. As they research, I have them check with me to make sure that they are doing the process the way I want them to do it. One student resented the way I wanted to check each step and tried to confront me on it in class. I would not let him argue about it during class time--it was a time-waster and detrimental to the educational environment for the others. In his journal he raged every day for two weeks about how childish the checks were and how he refused to do them, but he did turn in the paper--albeit without the checks--and passed the class.

I find as frustrating to teach as they do to

Another student, Hector, virtually screamed at me in his journal for several days after the first progress report because he felt his journal should have earned more points. At one point, he asked a series of questions that I didn't answer; he then wrote:

> *I'm not trying to change my grade by expressing my opinion. You know me better than that. I think your missing the point, I notice you only answer the questions that concern you not the journal.*

I wrote back:

> *I'm not going to be dictated to by an 18-year-old with a bad attitude. You don't want information; you want to attack. So buzz off.*

His answer:

> *Bzzzzzzzzzzz. I'm 17 years of age. Enough of these bellicose communications. I did some extra credit--its a so 'n' so poem. There will be more by Monday but this ones really to cover up if I get a bad grade.*

My response:

> *God, I'm glad that is over! I have trouble staying mad.*

I love that exchange. And it is indicative of the value of the journal as a tool of real communication. I think teachers and students spend too much time together not to get angry with one another. It is vital to give students the right--and the right place--to blow off steam. I believe that using the journal as a safety valve is one of its most important uses. ●

[Cyndy Shelton is spending this school year as a teacher-researcher with the UCLA Writing Project, studying her own use of dialogue journals.]

Dialogue Journals in Marketing Education

- Kathy Andersen-Smith
Broadneck SHS, Annapolis

In an effort to implement a useful approach to my school's writing across the curriculum program, last year I began using dialogue journals with my Marketing Education Work Experience students. Rather than finding this approach the burden on me that I anticipated, the experience of dialoguing with my students has been enlightening and enjoyable for myself, and I believe it has proved to be a good educational experience for them.

Most important, our dialogues have helped me achieve a number of my goals for this class. The dialogue journal has helped me keep closer tabs on the work lives of my students. It has helped me to know each student in ways I might not have within the constraints of the classroom. Dialoguing has helped me to advise and counsel students on a variety of topics including future educational and career plans. Perhaps most valuable to me as a teacher, the use of the dialogue journals has enabled me to keep the marketing education curriculum relevant to the needs of the students through their feedback to me.

An example of a typical dialogue in my class goes like this:

S: *The work isn't that bad, but I definitely need more money and more hours. I would like to find another job with more hours and more pay. I'm gonna continue to look.*

T: *If you are going to continue to look, have you considered keeping this job during the day in order to get the experience, and looking for another job a couple of nights a week?*

We continued to discuss this particular topic for about three weeks until the student had clarified in her own mind what she wanted to do about her job.

I have found coupling students' dialogue journal writing with Friday wage record completion works effectively. Each Friday, when the students enter class they pick up their journals along with their wage folders. They generally read my comments and begin writing in their journals; when the journal writing is finished, they fill in their wage record. Each week, I suggest a topic related to their work experience, but always encourage them to abandon the suggested topic if they prefer only to address my comments, discuss something important in their life or an issue from class, critique recent activities, or just "jot down some thoughts." About ten to fifteen minutes of classtime is needed for the combined tasks of journal responses and recording of wage information. When done, both journals and wage records are returned to a locking file cabinet--assuring the students of confidentality.

I have found that I am usually able to read and react to about twenty journals in an hour. As both my students and I become accustomed to this kind of direct, informal conversation, the time it takes to react to journal comments tends to decrease.

One more comment about time--the dialogue journals may take me an hour or so to respond to once a week, but so much of the individual counseling that once took up valuable classtime is now accomplished through the dialogue journals.

In their journals, my students have shared with me such diverse issues as the fear of crossing a bridge on the route to work, future entrepreneurial plans, job changes, distress over an upcoming family move, and future educational plans. Even though they can write about anything, the majority of their comments are school- or work-related. Those that aren't are usually problems that affect the student's school and work performance directly, and it's important for me to know about them.

Being aware of the variety of issues that are discussed by the students in their journals has definitely made me a more effective teacher and work coordinator. In addition to all the benefits for me in using dialogue journals, I believe that these dialogues have helped me create in the mind of the students the image of the teacher as a human being who has a life outside the classroom. ●

Time - The Greatest Gift We Can Give Another

- Leslee Reed

"Oh, yes, I'd love to do dialogue journals with my class but I just don't have the time!"

How frequently I have heard that--and so has everyone who has spent some time explaining dialogue journals to another teacher. My first reaction is: "If you only knew what the investment in that time would be for you, as well as your class, you couldn't afford not to take the time."

Each of us has the same amount of time--no question about that. Our choice lies in the investment of our time which will reap the most good for us and our students in the long run. Clearly, time in response to individual journal entries adds up to an enormous value to BOTH teacher and student.

Time has been called "the greatest gift we can give another." A friendly chat lets another know that you care because you have taken time for them to say what it was they wanted to tell you. But our young people seldom have the total undivided attention of an adult for the length of time they would like. Parents are often busy with homemaking cares during the few hours when students are home; teachers have many other students who want to be "heard" and commitments to fulfill.

Of course, there are always those "aggressive" individuals who make their ideas known verbally in spite of the limited amount of time available--and as a result, those who are less demanding are left feeling even more frustrated because they were not able to add to or refute what was being said. Faced with this, all of us would certainly agree that the ideal would be ten minutes each day devoted to each student as an individual, without any distraction. Not only could we allow each student to tell us what is on his or her mind, but the student would be helped by the very process of anticipating the opportunity, and formulating the message to be shared. With a class of 35, that would take about 5.8 hours. Absolutely impossible!

Yet it is just this "impossible" that dialogue journals manage to provide for those willing to take the time--not six hours but 30 minutes to an hour each day at my level (elementary).

Teachers may understand the benefits to students, but wonder of what value it is to them. Early in our educational careers, we learned the basic principle of immdiate feedback or response to stimulate the learner's active thinking and motivation. We assume that principle applies only to our students. Yet as working individuals, we also need this daily stimulation, this immediate feedback, to keep us fresh, vital, and to give us a deep sense of knowing that we are essential to the educational process. The daily responses through dialogue journals do just that!

Unfortunately we spend too much time in meetings that dull our thinking, annoy us and make us feel that time has been wasted. Here is an antidote to those feelings--real response, genuine feelings and the variety and challenge that only a wide-awake group of students can provide. After a long, often difficult day, writing in the journals is a catharsis which leaves me feeling good about myself, stimulated by what was written, and eagerly thinking ahead about doing what I enjoy so much--having real contact with real learners.

For those teachers whose real stumbling block is mountains of papers to grade, I say, "Of course, but have you taken a good look at your grading process and assessed its real value to the students and to you?" There are ways of structuring your class so that the accountability of the assigned task is so clear and specific that your "grading" time is cut way down, and student self-evaluation time is increased. Value of time spent on each of your tasks, relative to its worth to the student and teacher, becomes the equation for creating the time you need.

Taking the time for dialogue journals not only benefits my students; it serves to validate me as a teacher and learner. Such a worthwhile investment! ●

[LESLEE REED is the Los Angeles sixth grade teacher whose use of dialogue journals was discovered and studied by Staton, Shuy, and Kreeft in the original NIE-sponsored study (1982) and in a second NIE study of ESL students (Kreeft, Shuy, Staton, Reed and Morroy, 1985). These studies resulted in the widespread understanding and dissemination of the concept and practice. She continues to provide readers with her expert, sensitive views on dialogue journal use and benefits.]

RESEACH ON TEACHER STRATEGIES

Exploring the Effects of Glib Responses to Journal Entries

- Rob Tierney, Ohio State University

I had two reasons for wanting to explore the use of dialogue journals in my undergraduate language arts class. I wanted to introduce dialogue journals to them, and I wanted to explore what would happen when my responses were more or less sincere. From my observations of peer response groups, teacher-student conferences and evaluative comments on student papers, I recognized that teachers often responded in different ways (at different times) to students, and that some students never paid much attention to those sets of comments which tended to be almost glib (e.g., "good work. I liked the way you developed your topic"; or "needs some work").

To explore with my students the effect of different types of responses, I decided to systematically vary the way I responded to their entries. I chose three response patterns: glib, personal and reflective. A glib response is one that is similar to the 10 to 15 word responses that I (and, I believe, many teachers) tend to compose. For example, a glib response to a student's concern might involve one or two insubstantial statements pertaining to what was discussed. A personal response involved sharing personal experiences or views which paralleled those of the students. I would often talk about my own experiences as a teacher, writer or student. For example, in response to one of my student's descriptions of their initial attempts to conference with a student, I discussed some of my own successful and unsuccessful attempts. Reflective responses involved the use of questions which were intended to have the students think about, explain or elaborate upon certain ideas. For example, a reflective response to a student's description of a teaching encounter might involve some reactions, but would be mainly questions encouraging the student to think more about what happened.

Over the course of the semester, we wrote back and forth at least ten times. To examine the effects of my different response patterns, I assigned students to one of six possible combinations. Some students received personal response patterns to three letters, then reflective followed by glib; other students received reflective followed by personal and then glib; yet others began with glib, and so on.

What happened? It depended on the type of response the student received. Students who received personal and reflective responses were eager to write back to me. They felt as if I had responded to their concerns and addressed their explicit and implicit questions; they became more involved in the course. At the same time, their confidence as writers grew.

If a student received a glib response, his or her desire to write back diminished. Some complained that they did not know what to say and, in fact, the amount of writing they generated lessened. Interestingly, students did not complain about receiving this type of response unless they had received some which were either personal or reflective prior to the glib response. The following letter from one of my students will give you a feel for how students reacted to glib responses once they had experienced other kinds of responses.

> *Rob,*
>
> *In your response to my second letter (concerning feedback), you said you don't know if you give good feedback. Well, to be truthful, I was disappointed at your response to my third letter (about the ocean). Your response was "Me, too. Thanks for sharing your writing. I love the ocean, too." As soon as I read that I thought "Is that all?" I felt as if I had presented a problem (my difficulty in figuring out a way to record what I had experienced). I understand that you are not Dear Abby: I wish that you could have either shared a similar experience or suggested some possible solutions. I have been pleased with your feedback on my first and second letters. I was just disappointed with this last one.*
>
> *Laurie*
>
> *P.S. I hope that you don't think I am too direct.*

(Please note that although my response was somewhat personal, it was very brief and lacked any substantial response to her concerns.)

Toward the end of the semester, we took time out to reflect upon the use of dialogue

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journals and I told them how I had purposely varied the responses I gave. As we discussed what happened, we agreed that the journals enabled us to address a variety of concerns and issues which otherwise would have gone unexplored. It enabled us to establish a form of communication. From my perspective, it proved to be invaluable for counselling students who were contemplating dropping out of the program. They were relieved to discover that I was not as insincere as my occasional glib responses would suggest and that, in fact, I had as much difficulty composing them as they had receiving them. Indeed, the experience of receiving a glib comment would not be forgotten. Most importantly, many of us realized that these encounters with glibness had cured us of responding this way to others.

Just as a sidenote, the findings I have described prompted me to ask another question. Would elementary school children embrace journals and be equally susceptible to the effects of various kinds of responses? In a follow-up study at the elementary level, the children were even more sensitive to the various responses they received. ●

Mapping Conversational Roles in Dialogue Writing

- Martha K. Dolly, Frostburg State College

Researchers have long been studying what goes on between teachers and students in classrooms, including teachers' uses of questioning to control classroom interaction. A new and promising area of study is interaction in dialogue writing, which allows both partners to use a wider variety of strategies and language functions than is possible in the classroom. My dissertation research proposes a means of mapping dialogue journal interaction so we can evaluate how fully we are encouraging our students to participate in shaping the written dialogue.

We know from research and experience that dialogue writing allows students an opportunity to develop language abilities they don't often get a chance to practice in the classroom: to pursue topics of their own choosing (even questioning the teacher in the process) and to learn to extend and manage discourse, both oral and written. But there seems to be a great deal of variation in the amount of responsibility students assume. Some students readily nominate and pursue topics (often soliciting input from the teacher), while others prefer to rely on their (perhaps quite willing) partner to determine the direction of the conversation. One teenage girl from Spain apologized at the end of one brief entry: "I don't know what to tell you because you didn't ask anything else."

No speaker, native or non-native, can truly participate in a conversation, written or oral, by merely responding to the other partner. Each participant must solicit input as well as respond appropriately. Each must be willing to acknowledge lack of comprehension and take steps to repair it. To encourage students to engage more fully in managing the dialogue and negotiating meaning, we might begin by looking at the conversational roles each is playing. For example, in comparing two "successful" conversations, I discovered that one young man was playing a variety of conversational roles (initiating, responding, reacting, and repairing), while the other was primarily a prolific responder who seemed to be stuck in that role.

My dissertation suggests a method of analyzing moves and assessing conversational roles. It focuses on two main move categories: advancing (initiating, responding, reacting) and repairing (identifying and addressing problems of language and meaning). The same moves are available to both partners, but each partner usually prefers some moves to others. By mapping the moves across entries, we can determine how, and how fully, each partner is participating and perhaps encourage some students to take on a wider variety of roles.

I believe this project will be helpful to teachers using dialogue journals with a variety of student populations, since all successful dialogue writing requires the active participation of both partners. The subjects of this study are twelve adult ESL students (representing seven native languages). In my teaching, I use dialogue journals primarily with American foreign language and freshman composition students, and I expect my findings to help me dialogue

(Continued on p. 9)

(Continued from p. 8)

more effectively with them as well as with the ESL students. The purpose of the study is not to suggest that there is any one optimal balance of roles but to provide an analytical procedure that others can adapt to their own situations, to foster the kind of student-teacher interaction that to them seems most appropriate. I hope this project will contribute to our growing understanding of the value of dialogue writing. ●

Research on Dialogue Journals - NEXT ISSUE

Doing research, especially on dialogue journals, can be lonely and frustrating at times--but there are both hope and help in finding out what others have done. We want to increase the "networking" among people who have started to do good work on attributes or effects of dialogue journal communication. The informal "research network" this newsletter makes possible might give you someone to talk to about your work, and it will allow us to refer other people to you who want to know about the area in which you are most interested (and probably expert!).

Next issue will be devoted to (actually, taken over by) summaries of the most recent research we know about--especially studies that are now in progress. If you don't think we know about YOUR work, send us a 250-300 word summary by February 15, 1987. We'll try to include as many as possible.

Some of the new work-in-progress we do know about includes research on the possible benefits of dialogue journals with high-risk adolescent students, with high school writers, learning handicapped students, and first grade students. There are also several excellent completed studies on the development of "voice" and on language development of ESL children.

A REMINDER: If you can't wait, remember that the BACK ISSUES includes an up-to-date publications list and abstracts of all the completed dissertations that we know about.

"Interactive" Writing with Computers: One Solution to the Time Problem

- Dennis Sayers, New England BESC
University of Hartford

Editor's Note: With the outgrowth of computers in public schools, more and more teachers are becoming computer literate, and even computer dependent. Dialogue journals certainly can be done on computers as readily as with paper and pencil. Now there is a new software program available called DIALOG MAKER, developed by our friends Dennis Sayers, Margaret Riel, and Jim Levin (of UCSD), for use as a management system for interactive writing on computers. We are especially pleased to be able to have Dennis Sayers describe DIALOG MAKER for us.

Interactive word processing can offer teachers one workable solution to the challenge of how to "make time" for dialogue journals in their classrooms. The DIALOG MAKER is an interactive word processor that helps a teacher create her half of a "written conversation" with each member of a large group of students. Bilingual English-Spanish, and English-French versions for Apple II computers are available from InterLearn, a software publishing cooperative which is based at the University of California-San Diego.

"Interactive" is an overworked term in discussions of computer technology, especially tiresome whenever it stands for little more than pushing a single key in response to a programmed stimulus. This use--or rather, abuse--of the word is particularly insulting for all of us who are committed to the personal and pedagogical value of truly interactive writing. In what sense, then, is the DIALOG MAKER really interactive?

The DIALOG MAKER promotes the dialogue journal process by helping a teacher to blend two kinds of messages--general and personal--to many students. Imagine this situation. Before class, a teacher writes a GENERAL message to the whole group about a shared experience--say, a field trip. Next, she writes PERSONAL messages to each student, and closes with a GENERAL message to all students.

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Later, students will individually "hold up" their end of the (written) conversation on the computer. As soon as a student has responded to the string of GENERAL, PERSONAL and GENERAL messages, the computer prints out a playscript--featuring the teacher and that student as the principal actors.

For example, when Maria sits down at the computer to read and to respond to what her teacher has written the night before, she sees:

[Mrs. Rainer]: The field trip to the museum was such a treat. It's great to get away from school sometimes, isn't it? The dinosaur exhibit reminded me of models of reptiles I used to build--only huge! I also thought they did a neat job of explaining how ocean curent's work--that was my favorite exhibit by far.

Maria doesn't realize it, but this is a GENERAL message the teacher has sent to all her students. The DIALOG MAKER pauses for Maria to write back. Maria signals when she is done, and then she reads this list of options on the screen:

```
        1 Nathan
        2 Maria
        3 Ivette
        ........
        19 Judy
        20 Edgar
       Choose (1..20):
```

When Maria selects "2," the DIALOG MAKER will show the PERSONAL message the teacher wrote her and will pause for Maria to write her reactions. (Let's NOT peek at the selections not written to her--after all, it is private!)

Finally, Maria answers the teacher's closing GENERAL message. The printout of her dialogue with the teacher has a personal touch, as will the dialogue with each other student. Of course, the teacher gets a printout of each playscript, which she will read before starting the next round of writing with the DIALOG MAKER.

Veteran "dialogue journalers" will appreciate how this approach to interactive writing facilitates working with large groups. The teacher in the example above, by adding two general messages to twenty personal ones, has tripled the amount of writing each student can respond to. Indeed, there ARE occasions when we would welcome each student's reaction to a general message, but how many of us balk at writing the same thing twenty times--or twenty different ways--to each and every one of our pupils? Often, we must choose to ignore commonalities, keeping our dialogue journals at a strictly individual level.

Let's return to the term interactive word processing. Most teachers by now are aware of the educational potential of word processing, and many have incorporated this general-purpose computer tool into their teaching. Yet very few educators have heard of interactive word processing. The concept is quite simple: Essentially, a word processor is linked to a program that acts as a writing coach. An interactive word processor is designed to offer a range of suggestions or "writing prompts"--and then to pause and wait for the teacher or student to write back.

Now the DIALOG MAKER interacts with the teacher and with students in distinct ways. The DIALOG MAKER is a "permanent" program that a teacher uses to design another "disposable" program for her students, which is eventually removed after the last student writes back. In other words, the DIALOG MAKER offers the teacher "journal writing prompts" in English, French or Spanish) to assist her in creating a series of conversational openers. At the same time, the DIALOG MAKER literally writes a computer program for the teacher by inserting programming symbols that will "pause" for the students to respond later.

When using the disposable program, each student sees only the writing prompts typed by the teacher--in the form of her authentic messages that invite writing. The resulting chain of interactions closely resembles the give-and-take of a spoken conversation, especially in its final playscript form. ●

[For more information about purchasing Dialog Maker, write:
Interlearn
Box 342
Cardiff-by-the-Sea, CA 92007
Current price is $49.95 and requires an Apple with two disk drives.]

Notes from the Field

These dialogue journal entries, submitted by Phillip Venditti and Robert Bahruth from their dialogues with ESL students at Austin Community College, show two important aspects of dialogue journals with adults learning English as a second language: They change and improve the student-teacher relationship and they provide a wonderful place to discuss information and misunderstandings. These entries occurred as students and teacher began reflecting on their experience at the end of the semester.

Ben: *By diag journal the relationship between teacher and students got more improvement. It increases our understanding each other, changes the old traditions. It is as if you were our classmates. I don't know about American students. In China, students are afraid when they are talking with teachers. More or less they feel nerves. But in your class I never feel that. I am very glad to have your class.*

* * * *

Maria: *Today is my co-worker's birthday. She had a party in the company's cafeteria. I saw her preparing the party with her friend. I was in the cafeteria but I didn't know that it was her party until I got back to work. I wasn't invited to the party. When I was back to the cafeteria for a break after working time, the party was over everything was cleaned up. She came to me and asked "Did you get a piece of cake?" If you were me, what do you think about her? We have been working together for a long time. Is it a normal way to ask others if they want to have the rest of a cake?*

Teacher: *What happened may have been the result of a misunderstanding. Maybe she expected all of her friends to just come without inviting them. In your country it may be necessary to invite each person, but if this was just an informal gathering she may not have invited anyone. If you think she is your friend why don't you ask her? Perhaps she is wondering why you didn't come to eat cake as well!*

Dialogue Journals as a Pathway to Publication

Dr. Bill Stokoe (formerly of the Linguistics Research Laboratory, Gallaudet College) has sent on to us this letter.

Dear Bill,

Two summers ago, I took a course from you that entailed keeping a dialogue journal. An unexpected trip to Japan nipped off the end of the course and I turned in the journal late after returning. You made the generous suggestion that perhaps parts of it--parts about the trip to Japan--could be published. Almost entirely because of your suggestion, I sent a segment (a bit rewritten) to The Washington Post. It was in last Sunday's paper.

So thanks, thanks, thanks. And thanks.

Sincerely,
Cathryn Carroll

IT'S YOUR TURN NOW! Using Dialogue Journals with Hearing-Impaired Students

by Cindy Bailes, Susan Searls, Jean Slobodzian, and Jana Staton

AT LAST, one of the several handbooks on dialogue journals is IN PRINT. It's Your Turn Now!, for teachers of elementary or secondary students, hearing-impaired or not, is on the effective use of dialogue journals to open new paths for communication, language growth, and understanding.

The handbook is full of wonderful examples of how very young children can get started in written dialogues. Teacher questions and answers, frustrations and successes are reviewed in a practical, direct way, and a theoretical summary is included.

Three of the co-authors are teachers at Gallaudet's Kendall Demonstration Elementary School and Model Secondary School, and have drawn on their extensive classroom experience using dialogue journals.

TO ORDER: Cost is $9.95 + $1.50 post. [Postage for Can., Alas., Haw., Carib., $4.50; Overseas, $6.00]

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OR PHONE, toll-free: 800/672-7720, Ext. 5341

Editorial and Subscription Policy.

- A Few Thoughts

DIALOGUE started out as an informal means for communicating about the use of dialogue journals with other researchers, teachers and educators. It has grown without any publicity from a freebie sent to 100 people in the spring of 1982 to 400 paid subscribers from the USA and 16 other countries by 1986. We have tried to keep the list to a manageable number, and hope that our secondary readership is much larger through xeroxing and sharing the copies.

Some readers have been interested in seeing DIALOGUE grow into a full-fledged journal [called THE DIALOGUE JOURNAL, obviously]. The idea is tempting, but so far the balance has tipped in favor of keeping the newsletter the way it is for now. One major reason is that we know that DIALOGUE is actually read, unlike the journals which inevitably get put on our shelves "for later" after a quick scan of the contents. So for the present we plan to stay with a newsletter format rather than expand, and to concentrate on further improvements in layout, graphics and other features to make it even more readable and lively.

Our subscription fee covers only the cost of printing and mailing, which are increasing even without the improvements we have planned. In 1987 the subscription price will double to $6.00 for three issues a year (spring, fall and winter, approximately). We hope that is still a bargain.

We still welcome short articles and letters from all of you, and are interested in suggestions for future issues. Contributions are especially welcomed which would fit in with the themes of the 1987 issues:

- Research and research issues (spring, 1987)
- Classroom management and behavior (summer/fall, 1987)
- Implications from the use of dialogue journals with deaf students (winter, 1987)

DIALOGUE is the newsletter about the uses, benefits, and theory of dialogue journals, a practice of communicating in writing about topics of mutual interest through continuous, functional conversations between (usually) learners and teachers. This newsletter provides an informal means of sharing information, ideas and concerns among those who are using dialogue journals and studying their uses in the United States and in other countries. It is an outgrowth of two National Institute of Education research grants to study dialogue journal writing with native and non-native English speakers. The newsletter is now produced with partial support from the Center for Language Education and Research (CLEAR), which is funded by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement of the Department of Education. For information about dialogue journal research and practical applications or the work of CLEAR, write: Dialogue, CLEAR, Center for Applied Linguistics, 1118 - 22nd Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20037.

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Dialogue

April, 1987

Editors: Jana Staton
Joy Kreeft Peyton
Shelley Gutstein

NEW RESEARCH ON DIALOGUE JOURNALS

Jana Staton

In the past two years, there has been a great increase in dialogue journal studies on an increasing variety of populations. This issue of DIALOGUE provides an update on the many new studies on dialogue journals, as a way of sharing methodologies, research interests, and where available, results.

We have included reports on studies which are just beginning as well as completed work for a particular reason: studying this kind of complex communicative event can be a lonely, isolated process, and the beginning researcher will find few "models" or standard methods to draw on. Each study is in effect a new pioneering effort. By including information on how to contact the contributors to this issue, we hope to put researchers and potential researchers with particular interests in touch with others doing similar work, so that we can all ask better questions, and improve the state of the arty of studying interactive written communication.

Reading over the articles, it is apparent that there are some continuing thorny problems intrinsic to the nature of research on dialogue journals. Among them are the difficulty of specifying outcomes in advance for any given population; the rather large degree of unpredictable variation introduced by the goals, beliefs, attitudes, and commitment of the participants; and the problems of studying an event designed to occur over an extended period of time. Our comments are intended to point out some of the difficulties we and others confront in studying such a rich, complex event.

Issues in Specifying Outcomes for a Given Population

The issue of what specific outcomes can be expected for a given population continues to make dialogue journal research interesting. Several of the researchers in this issue point out that their original focus has changed because analysis of the data has not shown the expected outcomes occurring.

We can see two different issues involved here. The first is the appropriateness of a specific outcome for the age and initial competencies of a given population. Bahruth, in studying migrant students in fifth grade who are just beginning to acquire English literacy, reports in this issue that he found spelling gains over the school year--one measure of improvement in mastering writing mechanics. In contrast Shelton, studying the dialogue journals of her high school seniors from a wide variety of backgrounds, reports that although she remains convinced that her students' writing has improved, she cannot detect changes in grammatical and other features. It is likely that the potential effects of written dialogues on linguistic competency are constrained by the individual's prior degree of acquisition of the linguistic code. Bahruth's younger students are learning the English linguistic code for writing for the first time; Shelton's older students already have a fairly complete linguistic code, including grammatical and orthographic features, which may be at some variation, however, from standard written English use. The older student is much less likely to 'unlearn' already learned features and acquire the standard version, even with exposure to the teacher's model.

What these research studies point to is our general lack of knowledge about what outcomes in writing acquisition can be expected for any given student population. The age and linguistic background of students, and their psycho-social needs, are all factors of major importance in determining the potential range of outcomes. For example, among college students, attitude changes, motivation to study, reflective self-awareness have all proved far more likely to occur as a result of dialogue interactions than have major changes in grammatical skills.

The second issue involves understanding that even an outcome such as "writing development" is a complex phenomenon which cannot be measured by picking some visible skill (such as spelling).

Scribner and Cole, in their attempt to determine the "effects of literacy" on the development of cognitive abilities apart from the general effects of schooling itself, came to define literacy as knowing how to apply a "set of socially organized practices...for specific purposes in specific contexts of use. The nature of these practices...will determine the kinds of skills ("consequences") associated with literacy" (1981, p. 236).

So too, the dialogue journal is not a general, or universal practice, but one that is highly contextualized. The goals of the particular teacher or counselor, the needs and intentions of the individual students, and the social context in which the dialogue occurs are major factors determining potential consequences. The great variety of outcomes now being studied supports the value of identifying specific contextual requirements and participant-determined purposes which set limits on the kinds of consequences which may generally occur.

The diversity of outcomes in the studies reported in this issue reflect just this relationship between specific purposes, specific participant needs and specific outcomes. In the section

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of studies classified as "Psychological Perspectives on Growth and Liberation," Armstrong is concerned with the occurrence of both personal and academic problem-solving at the intermediate level; Winston examines her own growth as a teacher and the accompanying liberation among her socially oppressed, low-achieving students; Redman brings to her study her purpose to know the "whole" child and therefore is adopting a Gestalt framework for analyzing the content of the dialogue exchanges. Colfer and Jensen both focus with awareness and self-reflection concerning schooling and achievement.

In contrast, a very different set of effects or outcomes, but a similar diversity is found in the section "Studies of Text and Discourse;" Harrington is examining changes in voice and metalinguistic awareness among high school students in a writing center, where writing and voice are explicit and shared topics of concern; Gutstein focuses on the much broader issue of "communicative competence"; Whisler examines the development of cohesion in a fifth-grader's dialogue texts while Albertini looks at coherence markers in the writing of deaf students. Bahruth, as mentioned, found growth in spelling for bilingual elementary students.

All of these studies contrast with the beginning literacy studies of Eddis and Macguire, Farley, and Peyton, where the teacher's concern is for the development of literacy skills, and the student's focus is on mapping thought into written language, leading to research of the acquisition of skills in using the written code.

As researchers are finding with all other kinds of written discourse, the question "What are the effects of using a dialogue journal?" does not have single, or even a set of answers, but is highly specific to the particular topics, participants and social setting in which the dialogue journals are being used.

The Issue of Teacher Involvement and Effects

Directly bound up with the problem of deciding what outcomes or results to analyze is the need to account for the influence of the particular teacher or other adult involved in the dialogue. Dialogue journals in reality have three components: the use of writing in a shared book, the features of the dialogue (equal turns, mutual topics, etc.) and the mind and personal resources of the teacher or adult involved. A number of the studies summarized here involve researchers who are also the adult participants--Harrington, Gutstein, Shelton, Albertini, Eger, Winston, Redman, Colfer, and Jensen. A similar number involve research on other's use of dialogue journals, ranging from novice users who volunteered for the study, as in Eddis & McGuire, Smollen & Clegg, and Rueda, to more experienced teachers selected because of their mastery of dialogue journals, as in Peyton and Seyoum's study of teacher strategies using the Reed corpus, Peyton's study of beginning literacy, and Whisler's article on the development of cohesion.

While being both participant and researcher may raise classic concerns from an experimentalist's point of view, there are equal pitfalls in asking teachers who are not familiar with dialogue journal use to participate in a study in order to avoid biasing the effects. Teachers cannot be "neutral" administrators of dialogue journal communication in some standardized way--as was intended in the traditional research studies Leslee Reed describes in her article. The teachers' values, beliefs, interest, and attitudes toward each student are an essential and unstandardized part of the communication, and will influence the outcomes in a major way. Thus Rueda found that even selecting teachers with similar "strong interest in writing instruction," and providing the same training and preparation, did not eliminate much of the variance.

The effects of dialogue journal participation on the teacher in fact must be documented, and the teacher's goals and values studied in relation to his/her characteristic way of interacting with students in the written dialogues, before one can know what outcomes to expect. A further problem comes in that the purposes and responses of the teacher are not even fully knowable by the researcher in advance, and thus not predictable until the dialogues are completed. Despite our best efforts, complex human interactions of which dialogue journals are one instance, remain understandable and analyzable only after the fact because of the lack of control we can exert over human participants. Appropriately, Smollen and Clegg have begun their study of dialogue journal use with a descriptive analyses of teachers' strategies before seeking to determine the effects of specific strategies on the responses of LEP students.

The Issue of Time

Dialogue journals by their nature are deeply embedded in the ongoing, extended time periods of classroom or daily life. They are not designed to be a "quick fix," or a focused change program producing the same results for all students. From all we know, they have been most successful when used continuously from the beginning to the end of the shared relationship-context, whether a quarter, semester, or year. Some of the research studies completed and underway have had to struggle with severe time limitations. In the real world in which research studies must be conducted, both research committees and the researcher's resources sometimes dictate that the researcher allow only a very brief period of time for data collection. The difficulty comes in assuming that one can detect growth or change within a short time frame, ignoring that, as the practice has been used by teachers and others, it has occurred over the longest extent of time possible.

To ensure ecological validity, the actual practice must have an adequate amount of time to become established, even if only small samples are needed for the purpose of research.

The issue of the time frame for actual dialogue use (as distinguished from samples of data to study that use), is compounded by the general finding that it takes a teacher who has not used continuous written communication of this sort from six months to a full year to become comfortable with this kind of mediated conversational interaction. Until teachers are comfortable and able to use fully their resources--cognitive, affective, linguistic--in managing interactions with the students, it is risky to study the interactions themselves, particularly to search for "effects" or "change." (One could very fruitfully study the process of teacher growth and change as revealed in the dialogue interactions--a study that is still looking for more researchers!)

These comments are only to remind us of the myriad, powerful factors which directly influence what happens in any

(continued from p. 2)

given dialogue exchange. The studies in this issue are a healthy mixture of empirical descriptive analyses of dialogue journal use in various settings and more focused outcome studies. We hope that this mixture continues, to provide a much-needed descriptive knowledge base about dialogue journal use at different ages, for different purposes. The studies also refute the simplistic division of research into quantitative or qualitative, by integrating quantitative, empirical analyses including correlational studies, to test the strength of relationships observed by qualitative analyses.

I come back at the end to the nature of dialogue itself--as something very different than an assignment, or other teacher or school directed practice. Each student enters the dialogue with a different set of needs, purposes, and concerns, and the dialogue leaves ample room for these to influence the direction and topics discussed, even when the teacher establishes a particular focus. If one attempts to "simplify" or control the practice too much, in order to meet the dictates of a research method rather than letting the research be "data driven," the chances of finding significant patterns decreases markedly. Most of the studies now ongoing having been successful in challenging traditional, but unworkable methods and have preserved the ecological validity and integrity of the dialogue journal use itself, providing us even in these brief summaries with a rich picture of dialogue journal applications and benefits, and raising many new questions for further investigation.

Scribner, S. and Cole, M. (1981). The Psychology of Literacy. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

NOW AVAILABLE!

QUESTION-ANSWER SHEET ON DIALOGUE JOURNALS WITH LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENT STUDENTS

This four-page fact sheet is an excellent overview of dialogue journal use with ESL students that can be used to introduce teachers to the practice, as a handout at conference presentations, or as a basis for discussion in workshops. In an easy-to-read, question-answer format, it describes the practice and the rationale behind dialogue journal use, with guidelines for getting started. Questions discussed are

- What is a dialogue journal?
- What are the benefits to students and teachers?
- How much time is involved?
- With what kinds of students can dialogue journals be used?
- How do I get started?

It includes a list of dialogue journal publications and suggestions for further reading.

For multiple copies, free of charge, write to:
Bill Code, User Services Coordinator, ERIC Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics, 1118 22nd Street, N.W., Washington, DC, 20037

ANALYSES OF TEACHER STRATEGIES

TEACHER STRATEGIES AND THEIR EFFECT ON STUDENT WRITING

Joy Kreeft Peyton and Mulugetta Seyoum
Center for Applied Lnguistics

In a manual on teacher questioning, Hyman (1979) states, "It is impossible to conceive of teaching without asking questions." Studies of interaction in classrooms with native and nonnative English-speaking students show that question-asking is the most frequent act performed by the teacher, occupying as much as 95% of teacher talk. Questions usually serve to establish and maintain teacher control and conversational domination, because they guide the course of the interaction.

When teachers begin to think about writing in dialogue journals, questions seem to be one powerful option for accomplishing their goals. Teachers want students to write freely and to extend and elaborate on topics, and often see their role in the dialogue as promoting student writing. But what is the best way to do that? Should dialogue journal interaction take the same form as much classroom interaction, with the teacher initiating writing topics for students or with students writing about self-chosen topics and the teacher asking a series of questions after each student entry to show interest and to elicit more writing? Our observations of dialogue journal writing over the past few years indicate that this is the idea many teachers begin with. We have seen dialogue journal interactions in which the teacher's primary contribution is to ask questions. We have also observed, or heard from teachers, albeit informally, that student writing in response to those questions is often brief and even elliptical, a simple answer to the question. In these cases, the writing takes on the quality of an interview consisting of teacher questions, brief student responses and then more teacher questions.

We have become interested, therefore, in the role of teacher strategies for responding, particularly the use of *(cont. p. 4)*

A HOPEFUL TALE FOR CREATIVE (BUT DISCOURAGED) RESEARCHERS

God looked down upon the world recently and was perplexed at the confusion and complexity. God decided that in order to know more about the problem research was necessary, as a step toward understanding and action. So God applied to the National Science Foundation for a grant. After six months, a letter came back rejecting the proposal for the following reasons:

a) The applicant hasn't done any new, creative work since the last (first) project;
b) No one has been able to replicate the applicant's work;
c) None of the applicant's publications have appeared in refereed journals.

[With thanks to Peter Strevens, Director of the Bell Foundation in England, who shared this tale at the 1987 Georgetown Roundtable on Languages and Linguistics.]

(continued from p. 3)

questions in dialogue journal writing. We decided to study the strategies that one experienced and successful dialogue journal teacher, Leslee Reed, uses in her dialogue journal writing, focusing on her use of questions. We addressed three questions: What are the strategies that this teacher uses in her dialogue journal writing? Does teacher strategy affect student writing? Do teacher strategy and student response vary according to student English proficiency/academic performance? Since she has had a great deal of success with dialogue journals during her 20+ years using them, we considered Leslee Reed's writing a worthwhile object of study, a possible model for other teachers. By studying the writing of only one teacher, we could examine the effect of different strategies while holding the teacher constant.

We studied a three-week sample of dialogue journal writing of 12 students in Leslee Reed's sixth grade class, all nonnative English speakers. We grouped them as "high," "mid," and "low" performing, based on English language proficiency, scores on the Reading and Language sections of the Survey of Essential Skills Test administered near the end of their sixth-grade school year, and teacher judgment. The three-week dialogue journal sample was taken in the spring, in March and April, after they had been writing in the journals for around 7 months. This allowed time for the students to become experienced with this kind of writing, for the teacher to get to know each student, and for patterns of interaction to become established.

Teacher strategies

We first examined topic initiation and response patterns in the teacher's and students' entries. For each entry, we delimited topic domains and then determined for each topic whether the writer was initiating it or was responding to a topic written about previously by the other writer. We found, as has been documented in previous studies of the dialogue journal writing of this teacher (Kreeft, et al., 1984; Morroy, 1985; Staton, et al., in press), that she primarily took the role of respondent to, rather than initiator of, topics in her writing, thus giving the students topic control. Most of the topics she wrote about (around 75%) occurred in response to topics the students had written about in their previous entry.

Next, we looked at the strategies she used when she wrote about a given topic. Here, we were primarily interested in the use of questions, which directly elicit student writing, versus "personal contributions," statements and comments which make no such elicitation. Therefore, we coded each of her topics as consisting of a question or a number of questions only ("How do you like our sign? Do you think we will finish it on time?"), personal contributions only ("Getting the shot was important. I hope you hands feels better now."), or a combination of questions and personal contributions ("How is your science project coming? It looked like you and Willie were getting a lot done today. I'm sure we'll enjoy hearing your report."). We found that asking questions alone, with no accompanying contribution to the topic, was something she did very rarely (11% of the time). Her most frequent strategy was to make personal contributions, used 60% of the time. When she did ask questions, she usually embedded them in her own contributions (a strategy used 28% of the time--see Table 1), as in this response to a student's writing about a hen.

Claudia: *my hen has some white lines in her dirt of her body that throws up by a hole. I don't know what you call it. She has wat it looks like worms, but little worms those white ugly worms & they are very skiny, what are they? do you know how to get the hen of her stomach sickness or is it usual for her to be like that...*

oh poor hen she cooks & coocks when I say pretty hen in a low low voice & she looks like she is used to children because she is cook & cooking when I say pretty things, oh she's so nice!!!!

Mrs. Reed: *It is normal for the feces (the waste from your hen's body) to have white lines in it. I've never heard of a hen having worms--but it is possible. Go to a pet shop and ask them or to a veterinarian. Who gave you the hen? Maybe they will know. We say a hen clucks. It is a pleasant little sound as though they are happy. They cackle when they lay an egg! That is usually loud! Does your hen cackle?*

I think hens like having people or other hens around, don't you? (Emphasis added.)

Table 1. Teacher strategies.

Contribution Only		Contribution + Question		Question Only		Total
N	%	N	%	N	%	
334	61%	153	28%	59	11%	546

In the dialogue journal interaction, this teacher responded as an authentic participant in the writing event, rather than simply as a questioners. She was involved not simply in eliciting writing, but in writing herself.

Student response to teacher strategies

To determine whether different teacher strategies had a differential effect on student writing, we looked at the frequency of student response to the various strategies used by the teacher--when the teacher used a strategy to write about a topic, how frequently did the students write about that topic in the following turn? We found that questions, whether occurring alone or in combination with personal contributions, resulted in a topically related student response more frequently than personal contributions with no accompanying request, as shown in Table 2. Therefore, it appears that as in oral conversation, questions have the power to elicit a response.

Table 2. Frequency of student response to teacher strategies.

Contribution Only	Contribution + Question	Question Only
85/334 25%	95/154 62%	34/59 58%

However, although questions tended to elicit more frequent

(continued from p. 4)

responses, they did not necessarily elicit more writing. At times, the student's response consisted of only a brief answer to the question with no elaboration, as in this example:

Teacher: *Oh, my! What happened in your math? Would you like some help?*
Simon: *I do not know. No I do not.*

For the students rated "high-performing," considerably more writing occurred in response to contributions or a combination of contributions and questions than in response to questions alone. Table 3 shows the mean number of words written in response to teacher strategies. Of course, quantity of writing is not necessarily an indication of writing quality, but since these students were required to write only three sentences a day, the actual quantity of their responses is an indication of desire and willingness to write.

Table 3. Mean number of words in student responses to teacher strategies

	Question Only	Contribution Only	Contribution+ Question
Highs	25.8	49.2	73.3
Mids	30.0	32.0	31.1
Lows	15.6	16.5	18.5

The means shown here do not reflect the variability in length of responses in individual entries, which is considerable. There are no doubt other factors besides teacher strategy which also influence amount of student writing. One such factor seems to be topic. At times, it doesn't seem to matter what the teacher does in her writing. If a student is interested in a topic, he or she will write about it extensively. However, teacher strategy does seem to exert some influence.

Variation in teacher strategies and student responses related to student proficiency/ achievement level

Finally, we found no variation in the strategies the teacher used with the three student groups. This is probably because we were taking a very broad look at the teacher's writing strategies in this study. Kreeft et al. (1984) did find variation in both interactional and syntactic features of this teacher's writing, related to the English language proficiency level of the student. We did, however, find variation in student responses to strategies, the "highs" writing more in response to teacher contributions than in response to questions occurring alone. With the "mids" and "lows", questions alone tended to elicit the same amount of writing as other strategies. It may have been that the "highs" were more attuned to the teacher's writing and were inspired to write by her contributions.

Discussion

In this study of teacher strategies, we found that the predominant strategy of this teacher is to respond to topics the students initiate and to make contributions herself rather than to simply elicit student writing with questions. This teacher is clearly acting more as a collaborator with her students in a cooperative writing event than as an outsider who simply elicits and promotes writing. We also found that although questions do elicit a response, they do not necessarily result in more student writing; and with the high-performing students, they lead to considerably less writing. The success with dialogue journals that this teacher has experienced for promoting student writing may lie precisely in their collaborative quality.

Hyman, R. T. (1979). Strategic questioning. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Kreeft, J., Shuy, R.W., Staton, J., Reed, L., & Morroy, R. (1984). Dialogue writing: Analysis of student-teacher interactive writing in the learning of English as a second language (Final report to NIE, Grant No. NIE-G-83-0030). Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics. (ERIC No. ED 252 097)

Morroy, R. (1985). Teacher strategies: Linguistic devices for sustaining interaction in dialogue journal writing. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Georgetown University, Washington, DC.

Staton, J., Shuy, R. W., Peyton, J. K., & Reed, L. (in press). Dialogue journal communication: Classroom, linguistic, social, and cognitive views. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Dr. Mulugetta Seyoum, consultant to the Dialogue Journal project, initiated and helped conduct the analysis on this study.

RESEARCH ON TEACHER APPROACHES AT THE SECONDARY LEVEL

Cynthia Shelton
Huntington Park High School, LAUSD

My research for the Teacher/Researcher project at UCLA began as a study to show that writing in the dialogue journals improved my high school students' writing skills, but after six months of looking at my data, I can't substantiate that claim, at least with the measures I was using. Too many students repeat the same errors for the whole year for me to show statistically validated improvement. I still believe that journals improve writing fluidity and attitudes, but fluidity in writing and attitudes toward writing are so affected by everything else that goes on in my classes, that I don't think I can prove how much the dialogue journals are contributing.

My research now will focus on: (1) the "how to" of using dialogue journals in a secondary class; (2) the pitfalls, such as students who refuse to write, those who don't want to turn in the journal because they use it as a private diary, those who insist on writing to "dear journal" and talk about me as a third person, and the problems of learning things about the students that I'd rather not know; (3) the kinds of teacher responses that make students respond in greater quantity and greater depth.

The audience for this product, part of an anthology of research produced by the UCLA Teacher/ Researcher project, will be primarily teachers who have not tried dialogue journals--a much different audience than regular readers of DIALOGUE. I hope to produce material that can be used for teacher training and/or conference presentations.

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AN EXAMINATION OF TEACHER ENTRIES IN DIALOGUE JOURNALS

Lynn Smolen and Blanche Clegg
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The purpose of this study is to examine the kinds of questions and comments teachers use in dialogue journals and their effect on the development of writing skills of Indochinese and Hispanic limited English proficient (LEP) students.

Previous research by Hudelson (1984) and Kreeft (1984) has suggested that dialogue journal writing can be beneficial in promoting the writing skills of LEP students. Dialogue journal writing allows students to write freely in a non-corrective, non-threatening situation. Krashen and Terrell (1983) have found that a low anxiety classroom environment is very important for promoting language acquisition.

The study was conducted over a four-month period in an urban school setting in the Midwest. Eighteen LEP elementary students, each taught by an ESL teacher, ranging from beginning to intermediate level proficiency, participated in the study.

The teachers were given a brief introduction by the researchers to dialogue journal writing. They were not told what kinds of comments to write in the students' journals. However, they were told not to correct the students' writing. The students wrote daily in bound notebooks on any topic they wished. The teachers responded consistently to the students' entries in the notebooks with comments, questions, and information.

After the four month period an examination of the notebook entries was made to discover the types of responses teachers made to students' writing. Three major categories were revealed: comments, questions, and directives. The comments included praise, general statements about self and the students' message, and critical comments. The questions were of three types: restrictive (either/or and yes/no), WH questions (requesting specific information) and open-ended questions ("What did you do over the weekend?"). The third category, directives, included requests for further information, such as: "Tell me about your birthday present."

An in-depth analysis of five of the journals, randomly selected, revealed the following teacher entries occurred most frequently: general comments (39.5%), WH questions asking for specific information (26%), and restrictive questions (13.6%). The two types of teacher entries that occurred least frequently were critical comments (2.1%) and open-ended questions (2.7%).

The next step of the research will be to determine the effect of different types of teacher comments and questions on the development of students' writing, specifically on their ability to elaborate on a topic, interact with the reader, and express ideas clearly.

Hudelson, Sarah. (1984). Kan yu ret an rayt en Ingles! children become literate in English as a second language. Tesol Quarterly. 18(2): 221-238.

Krashen, Stephen D. & Tracy D. Terrell. (1983). The natural approach: Language acquisition in the classroom. Oxford: Pergamon Press.

TEACHER STRATEGIES FOR ENHANCING LANGUAGE LEARNING AND THINKING

Cassie Huffman
Reading Specialist, Visalia, CA, Public Schools

The goal of my work (a Master's project) is to show that dialogue journals are one way to enhance students language learning and thinking in a "community of readers and writers." Frank Smith, Jerry Harste, Donald Graves, and Ken and Yetta Goodman all stress that the processes of reading, writing and thinking can best be developed in a literate environment where speaking, reading, writing, and thinking are integrated.

I believe that dialogue journal reading and writing can provide this literate environment because it is authentic, collaborative, holistic communication where the focus is on meaning. The major product of my work will be a description of teacher response strategies in dialogue journal writing which foster communication and learning. I am analyzing examples of students' and my own writing to chronicle my development as a responder over a two-year time span. I am also preparing a questionnaire for teachers to help them decide if dialogue journals will work for them.

This is my second year of using dialogue journals with fourth, fifth, and sixth grade students in a pull-out, compensatory education Reading Lab. My students, native and nonnative English users, test in reading at the thirtieth percentile or lower using the California Test of Basic Skills. The students come to Lab four days a week, forty-five minutes each day. I use an integrated approach to reading, where the focus is on meaning, and the emphasis is on cooperation and sharing to develop a community of learners.

Note: Cassie Huffman spent the months of February and March recovering from an operation, and writes: "The wonderful thing about dialogue journals is that I'm still communicating with my students through them even though I'm not at school. This definitely fits the criteria of authenticity!"

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NEXT ISSUE: Classroom Management and Behavior
DIALOGUE's summer/fall issue will discuss the various uses of dialogue journals to help teachers with classroom management and behavior, student motivation, and attitudes--both recent research and reports from teachers. We would like to have contributions from anyone who has insights, research or comments on this topic--deadline is July 1, 1987.

(*Examination of Teacher Entries, cont.*)

Kreeft, Joy. (1984). Dialogue writing: Bridge from talk to essay writing. Language Arts. 61(2).

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SPECIAL POPULATIONS: GIFTED & LD

TEACHER INPUT STRATEGIES IN MICROCOMPUTER- BASED INTERACTIVE WRITING WITH LEARNING DISABLED STUDENTS

Robert Rueda
University of Southern California

The present study is a descriptive investigation of special education teachers' use of microcomputer-based interactive writing software with learning disabled students. The study incorporates a theoretically meaningful approach to writing instruction using the technology of the computer in an interactive writing situation. This investigation describes the type of teacher input in microcomputer-based dialogue journal writing and documents frequency of use. A further goal was to develop hypotheses regarding the most effective teacher strategies in this type of writing.

The theoretical framework for this research provides a basis for designing writing instruction for any novice learners, and provides support for understanding the potential value of teacher-student interactive writing. Cognitive/Developmental theories suggest that the role of the teacher should be to facilitate writing as a developmental process, in which children experience changing understandings and uses of print and writing. Further, instruction must be based on the limited processing capacities of the novice and/or handicapped writers, minimizing where possible the low-level production problems associated with complex writing tasks. Functional/Interactional theories, concerned primarily with the social and interactional aspects of writing, stress (1) the role of social interaction with "more capable others" as a prime factor in development and learning, (2) the importance of providing authentic, meaningful, and functional tasks in learning to write, and (3) encouraging attempts to bridge from present levels of oral proficiency to future desired levels of written proficiency.

Eight special education teachers and two regular classroom teachers were trained to use specially created software designed to permit dialogue journal writing through the computer. Each teacher then selected three to four students to work with. All of the special education students (N=24) were learning disabled, while the students in the regular classroom settings (N=7) were not. One additional special education teacher wrote dialogue journals with four students using a word processor with no special software, and with four more using paper and pencil. All 39 students in the study were between grades four and six. The period of the study was approximately three months.

The printed journal entries for each teacher-student dyad were collected and each teacher completed several questionnaires as part of the data collection process. These included a computer knowledge and use questionnaire, a computer literacy measure, a self-rating of skills measure and a questionnaire assessing the teacher's theoretical orientation to writing. The teachers were also interviewed at length regarding their strategies in writing to the students, the use of the software, and the students' writing behavior. Participating students also completed several questionnaires.

The analysis of the dialogue journal writing consisted of two major parts. First, student and teacher writing was analyzed for structural features such as fluency and complexity. Second, because dialogue journals are meant to take advantage of students' existing language and conversational abilities, an analysis was conducted of extended topic chains defined here as the maintenance of a common topic over more than one journal entry. Two types of extended topic chains were classified. "Initiating chains" are those where the teacher initiated the topic. "Sustaining chains" are those where the student initiated the topic but the teacher's response led to a continuation of the topic by the student. Finally, teacher entries in either of the topic chain types were coded as to the type of language function or "local strategy" the teacher used in her writing.

Results

Teachers exhibited a great deal of variation in the frequency with which they engaged in the journal writing and in the amount they wrote to individual students. This was surprising because the teachers had been selected for the study based on their strong interest in writing instruction, and had been coached in the virtues of daily journal writing. The variation in the amount of text generated was due in small part to the accessibility of the computers, but correlated more highly to the teachers' level of computer literacy, their rating of the software, and to their theoretical orientation to writing.

Analysis of the journal texts revealed that the teachers wrote much more than the students did. The majority of the extended topic chains were "initiating chains" (initiated by the teacher). Teachers used the local strategies of reporting personal facts, reporting general facts, reporting opinions/ expressing feelings most frequently with this type of topic chain. Sustaiining chains (introduced by the student) were much less frequent. Teachers used requests for personal information, reporting opinions/expressing feelings and requests for general information as local strategies in sustaining chains.

Teacher questions were also analyzed. Yes/No questions did not produce extended topic chains. Interestingly, in contrast to traditional oral classroom interaction, teachers employed very few "known answer" questions and few Initiation-Reply- Evaluation sequences in the journals. The regular class teachers produced fewer entries and fewer topic chains than the special education teachers did. Other than this, there were few differences between the two groups of teachers.

The study suggests that there were wide differences in the abilities of the teachers to successfully develop extended written interactions with mildly handicapped students. Those teachers who engaged in "interactive" and/or "personalizing" strategies such as self disclosure, asking personal and meaningful questions, etc., appeared to be the most successful in producing student responses and extended topic chains.

This work demonstrates that microcomputers can be successfully used for activities other than independent student-centered drill and practice, with learning disabled as well as regular students. However, teacher computer literacy and teachers' theoretical orientation to the teaching of writing are seen as critical elements to the success of these innovative uses of the computer. Most importantly, the *(cont. p. 9)*

GIFTED CHILDREN & INTERACTIVE WRITING

Jack Farley
Murray State University

Hearing-impaired students, mentally retarded students (Farley, 1985), bilingual students, and non-exceptional students have all demonstrated their abilities to discuss personally relevant topics in written language with their teachers who act as interested, responding audiences. However, the efficacy of using dialogue journals with gifted students has not been documented. The following investigation documents one dialogue writing experience between a father and his gifted daughter.

The documented learning styles of gifted children and the characteristics for maintaining dialogue journal interactions are uniquely compatible: gifted children are seen as dynamic communicators and dialogue journal writing is viewed as a dynamic approach to communication. Table 1 lists some characteristics of gifted children (Herward & Orlansky, 1980) compared to characteristics of dialogue journal communication (Staton, et al, 1982).

Table 1. Comparison of the Behaviors of Gifted Children Characteristics of Interactive Writing

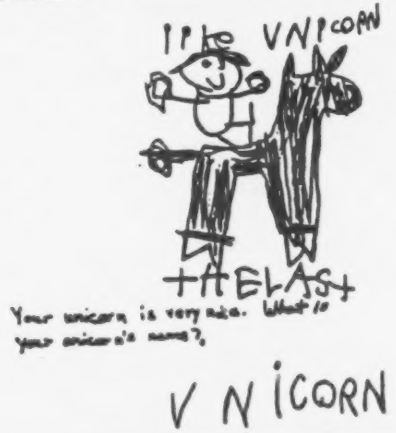
Behaviors of the Gifted	Characteristics of interactive writing
1. Expresses ideas and feelings well.	1. Allows for personally relevant expression
2. Can move at a rapid pace	2. Offers daily opportunites to use writing
3. Wants to learn, explore, and seek more information	3. Interactions with others for learning, exploration, and ample opportunity to obtain more information
4. Develops broad knowledge and an extensive store of vicarious experiences	4. Interactions possible on a wide variety of topics and experiences
5. Is sensitive to the feelings and rights of others	5. Dialogue informs each other's feelings
6. Makes steady progress	6. Frequent interactions allow for progress
7. Makes original and stimulating contributions to discussions	7. Dialogue can occur on any topic
8. Sees relationships easily	8. Interaction offers opportunities to discuss relationships
9. Is able to use reading skills to obtain new information	9. Interactions employ both reading and writing
10. Requires little drill for learning	10. Avoids a drill approach to learning written expression

If we are going to offer gifted young authors meaningful writing experiences, we cannot limit writing experiences to handwriting, spelling, and grammar drills. Innovative writing experiences are needed for the population of gifted children who are learning to write. Although the use of interactive writing with gifted students remains to be thoroughly investigated, the following describes one case study of a gifted five year old child who maintained a dialogue journal with her father. The practices of this child indicate that further investigation of interactive writing with gifted children should be explored.

A Gifted Five Year Old Writing with her Father

Marie was a gifted five year old child (IQ 135) when she began to keep a dialogue journal with her father. Marie's father gave her a notebook and asked her to write whatever she wished. He then wrote a response to Marie's writing, and they exchanged their dialogue journal back and forth several times a week. Marie's beginning journal writing efforts included a conglomeration of pictures, name writing, copying of her father's writinag, and invented spelliangs as can be seen in Figure 1. (Note: The Last Unicorn was one of Marie's favorite films.)

Figure 1. Marie and her father's Dialogue Journal Writing


I l ke VNIcoRN
THELAST
Your unicorn is very nice. What is your unicorn's name?
V N ICORN

Marie's dialogue journal writing practices were interesting. She would spend up to 20 minutes in producing a single journal entry, carefully combining her print with a related picture. Once her father produced his entry, she was capable of taking her journal writing "turn" and writing independently.

Marie was particularly fascinated with producing humorous journal entries and encouraged her father to do the same. She would often write of her affection for her father and other family members with entries like, "I love you daddy" and "I love mmomy Judy (her sister) bog (dog)." Marie was also avidly interested in discussing her kindergarten lessons. Her writing development in the journal was steady.

Both Marie's drawings and written language refined as she continued to maintain a dialogue journal with her father. Although her earliest journal efforts evidenced no punctuation applied, her writing soon included periods. Like all young writers, she made use of invented spellings for unfamiliar words. After discussing "spring" at school she wrote, "Sprer I like." After observing a favorite television program, she wrote

(continued from p. 8)

"I like tlve" and drew a picture of a television showing her favorite program.

Neither Marie nor her father were deterred in maintaining written communication because of Marie's initial limitations in producing conventionally "correct" written language. Marie continued to show improvement in her writing performance though she did not receive directed structural or mechanical practice. Marie would model her father's conventional written language, changing her writing "errors" to match her father's model.

Marie's enthusiasm for dialogue journal writing surpassed her father's. She was frequently ready and willing to write in her journal and demanded that her father write his entries in order to maintain his end of the dialogue. She was always curious to read what he had written and interested in responding to his entries. Marie's enthusiasm for writing in her dialogue journal has continued in first grade (at the time of this article).

For the gifted child, dialogue journals offer writers opportunities to discuss a wide variety of topics, and gifted writers doubtlessly have a plethora of topics to bring to written discussion. Dialogue journals offer writers experiences in both reading and writing messages of personal interest and thus avoid reading and writing in a drill fashion. Dialogue journals offer opportunities to use writing for communication, not simply for structural practice. The communicative abilities of gifted children should be nurtured in a natural fashon and not purposelessly practiced to the point of ennui. Increasingly, theorists of written communication are emphasizing that if gifted children are to be encouraged to seek this learning, educators and parents should concern themselves with makng sure this learning is available. Interactive writing is an underinvestigated approach to serving the gifted. Perhaps we can gain a greater understanding of gifted individuals if we offer the gifted regular opportunities to express themselves in written language.

[A more indepth discussion of this investigation will appear in the Journal for the Education of the Gifted in 1987)].

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Farley, J. (1985). An analysis of journal writing abilities of a group of educable mentally retarded adults. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Cincinnati.

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(*Teacher Input continued from p. 7)*

study also suggests that the social and interactional aspects of beginning writing activities are a key part of engaging students in the writing process.

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BEGINNING LITERACY

THIS REAL WRITING, WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

Nancy Eddis & Mary Maguire
with Freda Browns, Laurel Chin &
Louise Lariviere
McGill University

"This real writing, I think I'm getting it now," remarked Joshua, a first grader who had been trying his hand at dialogue journal writing for about two weeks. "It takes time to write a story, you know," he continued, "I did all this writing for myself."

These remarks were made to me as I was reading the latest dialogue journal entries of some children involved in a study which is in progress in Montreal, Quebec, Canada. The study will answer the question: Do dialogue journals enhance the language development of inner-city children? Mary Maguire, Director of the Reading Centre, McGill University, is the principal researcher in this project, with research assistants Nancy Eddis, Louise Lariviere, Freda Browns, and classroom teacher, Laurel Chin.

At this state in the project, we are still collecting data (i.e., dialogue journals, classroom observations and interviews with the school principal, the classroom teacher and the children.) This grade one classroom has nineteen children of many different ethnic origins. The diversity of ethnic populations in this classroom reflects the community in which these children live. The children's dialogue journals are being analyzed quantitatively using Halliday's cohesion and analysis (Halliday and Hasan, 1976) and a modified version of language function analysis (Staton, Shuy, Kreeft & Reed, 1982). Our final report will also include descriptive case studies of a selected sample of children and the classroom context from which these dialogue journals emerged.

As observer participants, the following example typifies my interactions with the children during journal writing time in the classroom. "How do you spell haunted house?", queried Veronique during a pre-Halloween session. "How does it start?", I ask. "Oh, with an h, but what comes next?" "Just write what you think," I comment. "But what colour is a haunted house?", she perseveres. "Well, what colour is yours?", I ask. "Black," she answers immediately and confidently returns to her desk to work on her creation.

When the research team visited the grade one classroom in September, it was immediately apparent to us that Laurel, the classroom teacher, had a warm, caring rapport with the children. At the beginning, however, Laurel did not understand the concept of dialogue journals. She was using a language experience approach and was more skills oriented; she would take dictation from each child, printing the messages in their "dialogue journals." After an explanation of the dialogue approach, Laurel changed her mode of responding to the children. She told the children that since they were doing so well, they were now ready to write on their own. Through the short period of discomfort experienced by some of the children, Laurel's firmly expressed expectation that each child could write enabled the children to feel like Joshua, who remarked, "I think I'm getting it now." It was then that the "real" writing and dialogue began for the children.

This project is proving to be even more interesting than we had anticipated because of a number of unforeseen events. At one point, Laurel had surgery and was out of school for a month. Her replacement, although given directions, found difficulty controlling her urge to correct spelling and use the red pen on the children's writing. In order to keep continuity in the project, the children wrote letters to Laurel and she replied, so that their dialogues could continue. The first set of letters reflected the substitute teacher's model of language learning in that the letters were short and there were no spelling errors. After a gentle reminder to the replacement teacher, the second set of letters arrived and were "untouched by teacher hands!"

As we continue the project, we feel confident that the data will support the position that dialogue journals enhance the children's language development. Two examples illustrate our view. Laurel wrote, as part of a response to Nicole's letter, "You are a wonderful writer!" Nicole's next letter to Laurel commented, "Your letter was dynamite!"

As I was returning the dialogue journals after xeroxing the entries for the day, Joshua looked at me in a distressed manner and said, "I forgot what I wrote about today." I took his journal to him and as he reflected on his writing he said, "Oh, yes I remember now, it was about the transformers changing into chameleons."

Halliday, M.A.K., & Hasan, R. (1976). Cohesion in English. Longman's.

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New Study of Dialogue Journals in Family Communication

Jana Staton

I am beginning a long-term project to study families who use some kind of systematic writing as one way of maintaining and enhancing communication between parents and children. Writing might be in the form of a dialogue journal, note-passing (if is really two-way and not just parental directives), or a continuous exchange of letters. I am beginning by interviewing families (parents and children) who may have tried this--whether successfully or not--within driving distance of Washington, D.C., and by corresponding or talking on the phone with other families at greater distance. I am most interested in families who have used writing for communication and problem-solving rather than specifically for literacy development, although this may be a delightful side benefit. I want to document difficulties and failures as well as successes, in order to learn as much as possible. I would appreciate hearing from parents or from any readers who can provide leads. Please call or write Jana Staton, CAL, 1118 22nd St., N.W., Washington, DC 20037, (202) 429-9292, and leave a number/address where I can reach you.

BEGINNING AT THE BEGINNING: FIRST GRADERS LEARN TO READ AND WRITE

Joy Kreeft Peyton
Center for Applied Linguistics

As part of a larger study of the writing development of limited English proficient students now in progress at the Center for Language Education and Research (CLEAR), Ruth Sedei, a teacher in Arlington County, Virginia, and I are studying the use of dialogue journals with her first grade class. Approximately half of her students are Hispanics and about half, Asian. They were around 6 years old at the beginning of the school year. All are in various stages of learning English as a second language, and most didn't know any English at the begining of the year. Some had never held a pencil before entering this class.

Ruth had found dialogue journals to be very successful in previous years, especially as a means for communicating with the heterogeneous student population in her classes, all of whom were limited English proficient. However, she had never used them with students who were so young, whose familiarity with English was so elementary, and who had had so little exposure to print. So we began by feeling our way through the implementation and the research, armed with her past successes and a considerable body of research about dialogue journals, but with a feeling of adventure and newness, and with many, many questions. We are still in the process of answering these questions, but have learned a lot during the past 6 months. The questions we touch on here are: How can the practice of dialogue journal writing be implemented with this group of students? What resources do students developing beginning literacy use for their writing? How is the writing scaffolded for the students? How does the students' writing develop over time?

Implementing dialogue journals with first graders learning ESL

Since the students had little or no English fluency at the beginning of the year, Ruth waited until they had been in school for one month before starting dialogue journals, so they would have some oral language base on which to build. They were each given a bound notebook with primary-spaced lines, and were told they could draw or write or both, whatever they preferred. During the first month, all students chose to draw a picture to accompany what they wrote. Some only drew, and that was fine too. They have the first 15 minutes of each day to write, a schedule that gives them a feeling of continuity and routine. Later in the morning there is a long period of time dedicated to individual work--reading, writing, and drawing--and those who haven't completed their journal continue before going on to their other work. This is Ruth's time to work with the journals as well. At the beginning of the year she called each student up to discuss what they had written or drawn. They read or explained their entry and Ruth wrote back immediately, reading aloud as she wrote. Then they read the entry aloud together. Now, 6 months later, all students are writing and able to read most of what they have written; with help, they can all read what she writes. Some students no longer come up to her at all, but read her responses and write

(continued from p. 10)

their entries without help.

Resources for writing

Sometimes we teachers and researchers exaggerate our own importance in our students' learning, thinking that without our plans and help they won't learn. The first day I visited the class, after the students had had their journals for about a week, I was very busy rushing around to "help" everyone write. I was eager to see the project "work," and was suddenly afraid it wasn't going to. I even wondered if we'd made a mistake by starting with the journals. How were these kids going to write when they didn't know how? They didn't even know English! Fortunately, these factors didn't seem to bother them! They simply decided what they wanted to say and then looked for the means to say it.

My first day in class was also Iris' first day. She knew no English at all. When I stopped by her desk, she was drawing some flowers in her journal, with a strip of green at the bottom of the page. "What are you drawing?" I asked in Spanish. "This is my garden," she said in Spanish. "How do you write 'flor' (flower)?" I told her and she wrote flor above her garden. Ruth and I decided that as long as I was there to help her, Iris could write in Spanish. When I returned the next week, she was still drawing gardens and flowers. But this time she wrote flower above her picture. When I stopped by, she pointed up to a chart on the wall by her desk. There, to illustrate the letter f, was the word flower. So much for writing in Spanish. She had found her own resource for her writing and her resource was in English.

I had never realized how full the world is of print; especially the world of a first grade classroom. Signs on the walls, notes on the blackboard, books and Pictionaries on the shelves, and self-made alphabetical lists of "Words I use a lot," all are resources for writing. Little pieces of crumpled paper with words written on them come out of pockets. Someone went to K-Mart over the weekend and, knowing he would want to write about it on Monday, brought in the part of the bag that had K-Mart printed on it. As the writing in the journals accumulates, the students often look back at theirs and the teacher's previous entries, as a foundation for new entries.

Scaffolding student writing

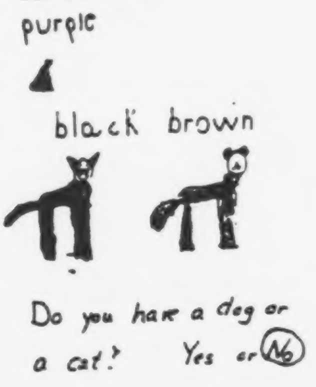
Our goal is that the students be able to write an extended piece of text about a topic that is stated clearly and elaborated on, and that over time they develop in their ability to choose and write about topics and to approximate standard written English. We believe that to do that, they need a great deal of freedom; we watch and gently nudge. Determining where they are and helping them advance involves a complex and careful process of "kid watching." The year began with whole-class discussions about what might go in the journals. But rates and types of development cannot be predetermined or applied to all students at once. They often must be decided on a student-by-student basis, and most of our attempts to move the writing along take place in individual discussions while they write or when they read their journals with Ruth. A student who writes "I like ____ " day after day may need to be asked to write about something else---"things you like to do, think about, or wish for." At the same time, writing "I like ____" may be a new and important stage of development for another student. Some students need to learn to seek out and copy words they need. Others, who have been busy gathering and using sight words since the first day of class, need to take risks with spelling and to sound words out. With some, who write only one or two brief sentences and close their journals, we talk and ask questions about what they have written, encouraging them to elaborate so we can understand their points. Others, who write long entries very rapidly, are encouraged to stop, think about, and plan what they want to say, and are assured that length is not all-important.

With one student, we are happy to see that she has found something to write. With another, we encourage more attention to what the teacher has written, and a response to that. As they continue to write, read what the teacher has written specifically for them, and talk with us about their writing, they develop in their writing and reading in a way that we hope is both comfortable and challenging for each student.

Writing development

Although we are still collecting data, we have noticed growth in a number of areas, which can be mentioned only briefly here. Without any suggestions on our part, all of the children have moved from drawing to writing. Many have dropped their initial reliance on copying words they could find or asking for help with spelling and are using invented spelling. Much invented spelling now more closely approximates conventional forms. Initially, many students wrote "I like ____ " each day, and simply mentioned something different they liked. They moved next to relating past events, beginning their entry each day with "Yesterday I ___" or "I went _____." Now we see much more variety in topic and style, with more elaboration of topics as well. Those students who initially wrote one proposition a day are now writing 2 or 3. Whereas initially their attention was focused on getting something down on paper, they now spend time reviewing and revising their writing before considering it finished. And finally, they are already developing a sense of audience--answering Ruth's questions, asking her questions, and talking while they write about how she as a reader might respond to what they have written.

Cynthia, from Colombia, illustrates some of these areas of development. At first, she was reluctant to write in the journal at all. After considerable coaxing, she took all of her writing time to draw and label one picture:



STUDIES OF TEXT

METALINGUISTIC ACTIVITIES IN DIALOGUE JOURNALS: A STUDY OF COMMUNICATIVE EVENTS IN A HIGH SCHOOL WRITING CENTER

Richard Harrington
Phoenixville Area High School

My introduction to dialogue journal writing came out of a need to initiate more personalized, interactional writing activities in the context of a high school writing center. I wanted students to learn that writing could function in a more conversational way where oral and literate strategies merge and where discourse is open to a variety of communicative events. This led me to initiate dialogue journals as part of the writing center and study the results, in order to see how oral strategies might appear in the shared writing experience between teacher and student.

In my preliminary case study of one high school student, I was impressed by the variety of language functions that appeared in our shared text. After several entries I also noticed the student's responses changing from a fixed, formal register to a more open discourse. As the student became more aware of the communicative role of the journal, her writing (and mine) became more flexible. Increasingly, aspects of spoken language indicated an increased facility of the student to respond playfully to the different codes and to shift registers as the situational context dictated. As this brief excerpt shows, language not only increased but also predominated in many parts of the discourse. Language was characterized by what Tannen (1982) refers to as a greater imageability, resulting from details that give the reader a sense of the 'richness' of experience, as this example shows.

> *New color: matches my eyes (basically). I believe it's called Kelly green; why, I don't know. I've decided, perhaps by using your Venn diagram in my head, to major in PSYCHOLOGY at Temple university, get my masters, my doctoral, work for————, and then move to England...Isn't nice to have one's future all planned out. I'll probably become a donut hole stuffer or work at Roy Rogers in Phoenixville.*
>
> *Speaking of which, I didn't know they had such nice houses. I saw a green one, like a southern plantation house, with white columns. Would look quite nasty in light beige with ivy growing up the sides and surrounded, well, overwhelmed by flowers. My dad said it's got one of those grand staircases but the owners let the inside go too long so it would take a lot of money to fix up. Oh well, nice dream anyway.*

Gradually, this student became less attentive to form (an obvious by-product of school writing) and became involved with the code of the mesage in a kind of creative coping with conversational situations. Sound patterns such as repetition, parallelism, volume, list intonation, and prosody, became clearly woven into the fabric of our written conversation. The shared context allowed for the free play of language as each participant calibrated language to fit a social and purposeful context. In effect, the student's dialogue journal became a catalyst for the writer's natural voice to emerge through dialogic interaction.

Applying the findings of this study, I have begun an ethnographic observation of the writing center and linguistic analysis of dialogue journals with my students, in order to record and taxonomize the metalinguistic devices which may emerge. These devices are performative functions of language by which writers call attention to their own language. That is, as a result of the conversational context of dialogue journals, students acquire and use self monitoring skills necessary for establishing different linguistic roles in relation to the discourse event

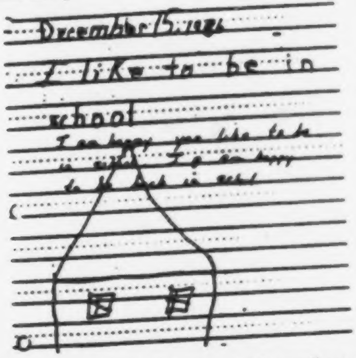
"The truth is, I believe every word I've written..." functions as an evaluation of a foregoing comment.

"I think this will give me an opportunity to get a few things off my mind," announces the purpose of the writer's entry to come.

Will the same kind of language activities found in the

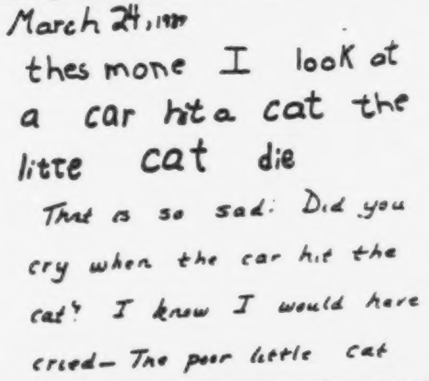
(Beginning at the Beginning continued from p. 11)

Her later writing was always done with a great deal of help from whomever she could recruit, the reason for the perfect spelling in this entry:



December 15, 1986
I like to be in
school
I am happy you like to be
in school. I am happy
to be back in school

She has just recently burst forth as an independent writer, writing meaningful messages and priding herself on needing no help.



March 24, 1987
thes mone I look at
a car hit a cat the
litte cat die

That is so sad. Did you
cry when the car hit the
cat? I know I would have
cried— The poor little cat

Several students, unbidden, have started writing books at home and bringing them in to share with the class. They are deeply involved in a reading and writing adventure that began with dialogue journals. They are now moving so fast that at this point we don't know where this journey will end. •

initial case study appear in context of the writing center workshop where as many as ten students are working in the informal school setting? So far, after four months of the year long study, they have but in different ways. As a way of unpacking the wealth of information I have already gathered from dialogue journals, I have borrowed from Hymes and Jakobson's linguistic categories to guide the formulation of a typology of metalinguistic activities. The key is form/meaning covariation, the commutation test: showing that something makes a difference because if it changes, something else changes with it.

I am finding that my students employ a variety of metalinguistic devices which enable them to calibrate their own language to the exigencies of the discourse event. One student, for example, discussed ways she might better communicate her intentions (message) by changing her essay (form) to a poem. Her awareness of a reflective audience provided a context for refocusing her message form from a referential function to a poetic function. Her revision required employing linguistic devices more in keeping with the aesthetic purposes of her message. This and other examples emerging in my study serve to support the claim that once students develop confidence in the shared medium of writing, they will experiment with language.

Bateson (1972) has argued that the social context is like a superordinate message that determines how a given act of communication is to be understood. It is by creating this recognition of social context that the dialogue journal takes on its most important role. When communication becomes shared and meaningful between a writer and a reader, it is more likely the crucial role of language becomes more a part of the modality --tone, manner, spirit--in which a communicative act is done. The dialogue journal provides a physical channel of written communication whereby the participants monitor their own ways of making "contact" with an addressee in a given discourse situation. As a result, it is the context providing the linguistic factors which enables a student to "metacommunicate."

As this research continues, I am finding that assumptions upon which we base the teaching of writing are changing. The dialogue journal represents one very important step in the shifting relationship between teacher and student. It represents an emphasis on writing built upon the immediacy of shared experiences which might best be characterized as speech events. Meaning is fashioned not so much by what a writer knows a priori but by what awareness evolves as a result of the play of sound and symbol and the contour and shape of the message as it is transformed in relation to audience, setting, formality, purpose, and style.

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COHESION IN THE DIALOGUE JOURNAL WRITING OF A STUDENT LEARNING ESL

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In my thesis, "A Dialogue Journal as a Means to Encouraging a Bilingual Student to Write Cohesively," I described the benefits of the dialogue journal for an unmotivated fifth grade Mexican-American student, Juan. I compared Juan's dialogue journal writing to his in-class essays, with a focus on cohesion. I found that his in-class writing was very weak in cohesion, whereas in the dialogue writing, Juan developed in his ability to write cohesively.

I believe that Juan's lack of ability to meet school essay standards of cohesion was due to several factors: 1) Juan has had very little motivation to improve his writing skills. Literacy is neither practiced nor valued in his home, and classroom writing assignments do not provide the motivation because they are designed primarily for evaluation rather than for real-life application. 2) Writing skills in Juan's class are taught primarily through grammar and punctuation drills. This may be detrimental since current research says that children do not internalize skills when taken out of context. In addition, since Juan's learning style seems to be relational (field-dependent) he has an even greater need for contextualized learning. 3) Learning to write planned formal essays is difficult for students like Juan, whose primary mode of language use is spontaneous informal dialogue. Since Juan has had very little exposure to literary language, he has even greater difficulty conforming to the essay model than do his do.

Juan's in-class essays were incoherent because they lacked key words and sentences necessary to tie paragraphs together cohesively. For example, he typically began a paragraph with the pronoun 'he' without ever naming who 'he' was, or he would leave out a summarizing topic sentence.

I kept a dialogue journal with Juan for one semester. As he corresponded with me in his dialogue journal, his entries became visibly comparably more cohesive than his essays. Surprisingly, his entries began to resemble well-structured paragraphs even though I had given him no formal requirements for the dialogue journal writing. Most of his dialogue entries began with a full sentence, including the topic and a comment. Sentences following supported the topic sentence.

I attribute these positive changes to the following: 1) The dialogue journal situation encouraged precise language because Juan wrote to an audience physically separated from him, who needed full explanation to understand things she hadn't seen. When Juan was not explicit enough, the audience showed misunderstanding in her response, and Juan learned to fill in the necessary information. On the other hand, in the essay situation the subject of the essay usually was first discussed in class and only the teacher read the essay, so Juan felt no need to repeat information in his essay that she already knew. 2) The dialogue journal involved real communication between writer and interested audience, which motivated Juan to be more careful in conveying his meaning. Juan even began to reread and revise his writing on his own--something he would

COHERENCE IN DEAF STUDENT'S JOURNAL ENTRIES

John Albertini
National Technical Institute for the Deaf

Until recently, descriptions of deaf students' writing have been based on analyses of formal compositions. Typically, they have focused on sentence-level lexical and grammatical anomalies (Bochner, 1982). As more instructors and students use dialogue journals, however, analyses of writing can include informal, interactive texts as well. Below is a summary of preliminary research in which one type of discourse analysis is applied to dialogue journal texts.

This type of analysis focuses on the internal thematic organization of a text by identifying patterns of topic progression. One way of defining organization and cohesion in written text is in terms of the "given-new contract" (Clark & Haviland, 1977). According to this contract, the reader expects that the writer will generally present old or given information before new. In a recent analysis of technical and scientific research reports written by professionals, Weissberg (1984) identified three versions of the given-new schema or three patterns of given-new topic development. The most common, the "linear" version, is where the new information of one sentence is reiterated as the given information in the following sentence. In the following example, the underlined words represent the given information.

> Hydrology is based on the water cycle, more commonly called the hydrologic cycle. This cycle can be visualized as.... (Weisberg, 1984)

The second pattern, "constant topic progression," is where the same topic is reiterated throughout the text; and in the third, the "hypertheme pattern," one facet or part of the whole becomes the topic of each successive sentence. A paragraph describing the parts of a microscope would fit the hypertheme pattern. A common fourth alternative identified by Weissberg is where a writer mixes two or more patterns.

My question was whether these patterns were general enough to apply to informal writing and to learner's English. To answer this, I asked two colleagues who were using dialogue journals for "interesting and coherent journal entries." The selection was random in that neither knew what kind of analysis I had in mind. SF, a nineteen year old college student, mixes two patterns in the following excerpt from a long autobiographical entry.

Journal (SF)

When I was born, I couldn't walked, talked and moved around. The reason why was that because I was born Celebral Palsy. My whole family were very depressing. They were told I would be retarding and won't be able to move around at all and also should send me to a special hospital and to stay there all my life.

One day, my parents took me to many differents kind of doctors to find out if this doctor can be able to help me out. They finally found a right doctor that said, "Oh, I can help your daughter to walk, talk and move around" & "She would not become like a retarding person." My whole family were praying to god that I would be able to walk.

Six years later, I started to learn how to walk, talk, and crawl on the floor. My parents have been working so hard on me. They took me to the Physical Theaphy everyday and to the doctor too. We have moved to (X) from (Y). The reason why we moved to (Y) because there was a very good school for me to go. This school is called "Celebral Palsy Center." This school helped me a lot with speech and everything. When I was up to 14 years old, I left from C.P. center to (Z) School for the Deaf. All of a sudden, I went to a public school. I disliked (Z) because it was too easy for me especially I didn't like to sign language. I am oral and always talk all years long. I mean that I always use my speech all the time. I am hard of hearing.

In her first sentence, the new information is, "I couldn't walked, talked and moved around." The topic of the subsequent sentence, "The reason why...", refers back to her physical limitations, establishing a clear link between the two sentences. Another example of this kind of link, linear topic progression, occurs in the third paragraph: "The reason why we moved to (Y) because there was a very good school for me to go. This school is called..." The new information, "a very good school," is reiterated as given in the subsequent sentence ("This school"). Much more prevalent in SF's entry, however, is a constant topic progression. From the third sentence of the first paragraph to the end of the second paragraph, the topic of each sentence is her family.

DS's journal entry was written as a personal reaction to piece on masks by Rilke.

Journal (DS)

The faces all over the world by we see only mask. Only people see their faces, are their relationship or close friend. Face is the most important. Face is a isolation. Mask is

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(Cohesion in Dialogue Journal continued from p. 13)

rarely, if ever, do in his essays. 3) The dialogue journal focused on the sharing of personal interests rather than on mechanics, which greatly improved Juan's attitude toward writing. Evidence of this is the many times he came to our tutoring sessions bubbling with excitement for me to read his written message. Also, his entries increased in length over time.

In actuality, I believe that Juan, as well as many other struggling students, has great potential which has not been tapped by traditional instructional methods. This deficit emphasizes to me the need for teachers to develop writing assignments that are more purposeful, personal, and audience-centered so that students will understand the communicative power of writing, and thereby be motivated to improve their own writing.

Thesis: A Dialogue Journal as a Means to Encouraging a Bilingual Student to Write Cohesively. MA Thesis, University of Texas at Arlington.

Jacqui is going to Indonesia with the Summer Institute of Linguistics, and we don't have her address there. We do, however, have a copy of her thesis. •

(continued from p. 14)

good safe keeping. It stayed out from people and it protect from the face. Mask is not authentic, it lie to people. Faces are beautiful and natural. Also mask is natural but may not beautiful. Face go through their touch natural world life with the mask from the birth till die.

Before analyzing this entry, some paraphrasing may be necessary to clarify the writer's intent. Where relationship occurs in the second sentence, relatives was probably intended. With three grammatical additions, the sentence would read: "[The] only people [who] see their faces, are their relationship [relatives] or close friend[s]." Also, the final sentence of the entry might be paraphrased as: "A face goes through experiences in the world and in life with the mask from birth till death."

At first glance the organizational schema seems to be reiteration of a constant topic: first, the faces, then the mask. Note that each and every sentence begins with one or the other. Also note that in the first and last sentences, faces are mentioned in connection with masks. This would imply that faces and masks are different aspects of a single persona. So viewed, the entry falls into the "parts-to-whole" or hypertheme pattern. In addition to brevity and simplicity, adherence to a single organizational scheme makes this text lucid and tight, that is, coherent.

From this preliminary analysis, it seems that topic progression schemas are useful describing cohesion in journal entries. In these journal entries, the writers adhere to one or more organizational schemas. Beyond the surface anomalies in these students' English, use of these schemas highlights the underlying cohesion and order in the writing. Of interest to writing researchers are the conditions which foster such coherence. Control of topic, a hallmark of dialogue journal writing, would seem a crucial element. Of interest to student and teacher is that such coherence emerged when the focus of the writer was on communication of content rather than on form.

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Clark, H. & Haviland, S. (1977). Comprehension and the given-new contract. In R. Freedle (Ed.), Discourse Production and Comprehension. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Danes, F. (1974). Functional sentence perspective and the organization of text. In F. Danes (Ed.), Papers on Functional Sentence Perspective. Prague: Academy Publishing House, Czech Academy of Science.

Weissberg, R. (1984). Given and new: Paragraph development models from scientific English. TESOL Quarterly, 18, 485-500.

A longer version of this article will appear in a book to be published by TESOL.

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ASSESSING COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE IN THE DIALOGUE JOURNALS OF ESL STUDENTS

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This study provides a valid methodology for the assessment of communicative competence in dialogue journal writing or any other functional use of written language, using three measures in triangulation. Triangulation is often employed when none of the measures available has been independently validated prior to the study.

The study has its roots in a dilemma that I, along with many other ESL teachers, faced. In the summer of 1981, I had been asked to teach a required grammar course to adult students, but I wasn't convinced that the formal study of grammar in isolation would help them become more fluent speakers and writers. I began keeping dialogue journals with each student, to increase their experience in the functional uses of English in a communicative setting. As the journals progressed, I noticed growth in the students' written communicative competence, and became excited about the positive changes I was seeing. The dialogue journals were showing themselves to be a vehicle for promoting and facilitating the development of communicative competence in writing.

The next step was to demonstrate empirically that these developments were taking place. I was concerned because I believed that the assessment measures already in use did not fully represent students' communicative skills. I discovered that there were no existing measurements that could be used to assess communicative competence in writing. My goal was to find or develop valid measures of communicative competence that could be used with first or second language students.

The dialogue journals from 18 of my adult Japanese ESL students provided the texts for analysis, development and validation of a methodology. The dialogue journal texts are communicative language in use, and are therefore valid as a source of data for the analysis of communicative competence.

The three independent measures used in this work include holistic assessments of communicative competence in dialogue journal writing, student grade point averages from all ESL classes taken during an intensive summer program, and an analysis of discourse topic features. The discourse topic analysis includes five aspects: topic initiation, topic continuation, topic recycling, topic content (domain or theme) and quantity of texts as measured in a sentences per topic ratio. The GPAs are clearly the most external, and not based on the dialogue journals; however, they represent teacher assessments of the students' general language ability in an ESL program, and were therefore included in the analysis.

Based on the results for each of the three measures, students were rated on each measure and stratified into high, middle and low groups of equal size. Correlations between the three kinds of measures could then be determined. The holistic rankings and the GPAs correlated very highly (.86), supporting the hypothesis that the GPAs in some way assess students' communicative ability in addition to their proficiency in the traditional skill areas. The correlation

(cont. p. 16)

DIALOGUE JOURNALS AND THE ACQUISITION OF SPELLING IN A BILINGUAL CLASSROOM

Robert Bahruth
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It is great to see the growing interest in interactional classrooms and a Gravesian approach to writing (Graves, 1982). Although many of us have seen just how effective dialogue journals have been in triggering an interest in reading and writing, there is still much hesitation and doubt in the minds of many researchers and educators about the new approaches which emphasize functional communication over teacher corrections. There is still a need to prove that developmental forms, such as invented spellings, and grammatical overgeneralizations and undergeneralizations, will indeed work themselves out in the minds of early readers and writers as they are involved in functional language use.

In a bilingual fifth grade classroom the dialogue journal was introduced to children of illiterate migrant farm workers. These children were reading at several grades below fifth grade and were falling further behind each year; most were heading for "drop-out" status. I prefer to place the blame where it really lies by calling it "squeezed-out," as a result of a system of mainstream schooling which failed to attend to the specific needs of these minority children (see Cummins, 1986).

Using dialogue journals, the intervention employed deemphasized writing errors, recognizing them as developmental in nature. The students were told to merely concentrate on geting their ideas written down in their journals, and the teacher responded to their ideas, providing them with a model of conventional language usage. Through their journals the students were reading and writing meaningful text on a daily basis.

Presently, through a dissertation pilot study aimed at analyzing the evolution of their language acquisition, convincing evidence has been found which should help to reaffirm the soundness of communicative approaches. To date some of the more interesting findings are

a)writing skills improved in the journals despite the fact that no emphasis was placed on form;

b) word length seems to have nothing to do with complexity (and therefore difficulty or ease of acquisition) in the mind of the child (an assumption underlying basals and reading formulas);

c) where invented spelling is concerned, two areas of persisting difficulty involved silent graphemes (e.g., know and light), and double vowels (e.g., people and because);

d) children can learn the conventions of spelling through individualized interaction involving different words for each learner, and

e) they seemed to be learning classes of words (e.g., words with and without final e, rather than memorizing them one by one as in lists and spellers, evidence that students are acquiring underlying principles governing English orthography.

At the end of the year these dialogue journal writers (who were also publishing in the classroom) averaged three years gain in reading!

Considering the educational histories of these students, and in light of the information above, it seems appropriate to quote Urzua (1985), "...children will learn those words and surface forms which code the experience they are having."

Cummins, J. (1986). "Empowering Minority Students: A Framework for Intervention." Harvard Educational Review, 56, 1, 18-36.

Graves, D. (1982). Writing: Children and Teachers at Work. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

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Diary Writing

Monday. Got up, washed, went to bed.
Tuesday. Got up, washed, went to bed.
Wednesday. Got up, washed, went to bed.
Thursday. Got up, washed, went to bed.
Friday. Got up, washed, went to bed.
Next Friday. Got up, washed, went to bed.
Friday fortnight. Got up, washed, went to bed.
Following month. Got up, washed, went to bed.

Mark Twain recalls this boyhood journal in *The Innocents Abroad*, noting that he opened it one New Year's Day and stopped, discouraged: "Startling events appeared to be too rare in my career to render a diary necessary."

(Assessing Comunicative Competence continued from p. 15)

between the discourse topic results and the two other measures were also significant. This correlation suggests that the linguistically based discourse topic analysis is also a valid indicator of student communicative ability, in that the composite of discourse topic measures groups the students similarly to the other two measures.

This study offers two major contributions to the field. First, the findings provide a baseline for assessing discourse topic management skills in the dialogue journal writing of these students. Second, the study shows that three types of assessment, used in combination, indeed provide an assessment of students' communicative ability in interactive writing, thereby validating these measures as used in this context. This and future studies can corroborate empirically my own intuitions and observations, and those of many other teachers, that dialogue journal writing facilitates and demonstrates the acquisition of communicative competence.

Gutstein, S. Toward the assessment of communicative competence in writing: An analysis of the dialogue journal writing of Japanese adult ESL students. Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Georgetown University, 1987.

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PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES: PERSONAL AND COGNITIVE GROWTH AND LIBERATION

The studies in this group are all quite disparate, but share one common thread, of looking at psychological aspects of the dialogues and of student and teacher outcomes - self-awareness, understanding, self-concept and attributions for success and failure. Most are also attempting to bridge the gap between psychological aspects and the text, by grounding their studies in text analysis. We hope that "psychological perspectives on personal and cognitive growth and liberation" captures the diversity and richness of this new group of studies.

"UNCOOPERATIVE, COLD-FISH STUDENTS" VS. "DISORGANIZED SOFTIES": RESEARCH ON THE USE OF PERSONALITY TYPES IN DIALOGUE JOURNAL INTERACTIONS

Henrik Eger
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I always thought I was a good teacher. However, over the years I began to feel uneasy with my quest for excellence and the way I made my students follow what I considered my enlightened "let's do it all" agenda. Did I really help each individual student to find his or her unique voice, or was I enforcing a demanding work load in the name of progress? Worse, was I cloning young people in my own creative-academic image?

I vividly remember one of my brightest engineering students at UIC who began to show opposition to me from the moment I introduced the dialogue journal. He frequently verbalized his disgust with "all those unnecessary things in English departments." The more caring and understanding my journal responses, the worse his replies. He said that he refused to "expose" any feelings, especially within an academic environment, and suggested that "caring" had nothing to do with "logic" in general or his "education" in particular.

Three events helped focus my uncertainties and concern.

1. I had studied and been trained in counseling approaches, learning to accept radically different ways of feeling, thinking, and expressing oneself, and listening and responding to others in ways acceptable to their needs.
2. I had discovered dialogue journal writing and the powerful extra dimensions it can bring to teaching, writing, and learning.
3. I had been introduced to the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), a non-clinical personality type inventory[1] and had begun to study the impact of personality types on behavior in general and on writing in particular.[2] Before this, I had felt misunderstood and frustrated by my students; understanding my own personality type in relation to my students changed my outlook completely.

The more I opened my mind to these new concepts the more I realized the potential for myself and my students. I began to ask many questions that eventually led to my dissertation research on "The impact of teacher personality types on student journal writing," and to this article.

During the next few months I hope to learn more about some of these nearly unexplored questions through observations, interviews, and experiments.

1. How much does a certain personality feel attracted to journal correspondence, say an intuitive writer compared to a sensing one, a perceptive teacher compared to a judging one?
2. Are there personality types that would feel particularly (un)comfortable in working with dialogue journals?
3. Does a formal knowledge of personality type influence the actual writing in dialogue correspondence? And especially:
4. If one were to compare student with teacher personality, could one measure and perhaps even predict volume or quality of writing, depending on the "match" or "mismatch" of teacher and student type?

With a knowledge of personality types, I hope that my study can help (college) teachers to enhance the understanding of their writing partners and may come to see reticent students as something other than uncooperative "cold fish." Similarly, young adults who have learned to become aware of aspects of their own personality might have a chance to revise preconceived expectations of themselves and others, thereby freeing-up possibilities of expression and growth through dialogue.

I consider dialogue journal writing one of the most creative and powerful tools in the life of a teacher and a student. However, I am wondering whether dialogue writing without an intuitive or conscious attempt to understand and appreciate personality type differences could be considered a dangerous instrument in the hands of those teachers who, over the course of time, have hardened and come to perceive difficult students as "uncooperative" or "ignorant."

Students, too, unaware of some of the strengths that can come from appreciating type differences, might wreak havoc on unsuspecting instructors by labeling them as "disorganized softies" simply because their teachers say or write things which the students find strange and unacceptable.

Some of the following comments by Myers and McCaulley, although written for MBTI counselors, illustrate the potential benefit for teachers who are interested in the connection between personality type and journal writing. Had I known some of these things when teaching the engineering students, our dialogue journals might have been an even more rewarding experience for everybody involved.

"In early sessions it is not useful to ask a thinking type to describe feelings. It is also not useful for counselors to label thinking types 'defensive' or 'intellectualizing' when they have trouble putting feeling into words, or when their words for feelings sound analytical."

"Sensing types will need to know that the information will have some practical value."

"Intuitive types will need to see possible future benefits."

"Feeling types can sometimes be more concerned with pleasing the examiner than with reporting their own natural styles."

"Introverts can be expected to be particularly concerned with privacy issues."[3]

Obviously, personality typology is more complex than these few practical excerpts indicate. However, while the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator cannot be a panacea,

(continued from p. 17)

interpretation and discussion of its results might lead college students and teachers to a much deeper understanding of themselves and of others. This, in turn, might help to generate more powerful writing because of the potential for very personal insights. Research on the impact of type differences on the writing of dialogue journals seems inevitable.

[1] Useful general introduction to the MBTI: Gordon Lawrence, People types and tiger stripes: A practical guide to learning styles, published in 1982 by the Center for Applications of Psychological Type (CAPT), POB 13807, Gainesville, FL 32604.

[2] Jensen and Ditikenson, "Personality and Individual Writing Processes," College Composition and Communication, 35, 285-300 (1984).

[3] Isabel Briggs Myers and Mary H. McCaulley, Manual: A guide to the development and use of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, Consulting Psychologists Press (577 College Ave., Palo Alto, CA 94306) 1986. Excellent handbook, bibliography.

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PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOL BY HISPANIC, YAQUI AND ANGLO EIGHTH GRADE GIRLS AT RISK

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My career in education has brought me in contact with many "at risk" kids. As a teacher, I found myself sympathetic to kids who faced personal struggles and suffering relating to home, school and personal lives. "At risk" does not have an exact meaning, and seems to include anyone who is not behaving in a socially acceptable manner, who seems headed toward failure as distinguished from success by common societal standards, and/or who tends toward activities involving personal danger. In keeping with this long-term concern, for my dissertation I decided to investigate how at risk adolescent girls perceive school. What meaning does school have for them?

As participants for my ethnographic study, I chose nine girls: two Hispanic, two Anglo, and five Yaqui Indian, all attending a middle school in the Southwest. Three of them had repeated eighth grade; all of them had failed or received low grades in subjects the previous year. The diversity in this small group is deliberate, to determine if girls from the two minority groups would view school any differently from their Anglo peers.

Dialogue journals became one way to gather information about the girls' perceptions during the 1986-87 school year, since I would not be seeing the girls each day. The conditions for our dialogue are not optimum, to say the least! We are given a drawer in the school office where the journals can be

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GETTING TO KNOW THEM THROUGH DIALOGUE JOURNAL WRITING

Tina Redman
Philadelphia Public Schools

In psychological theory the Gestaltists emphasize the whole pattern of behavior or experience rather than elemental analysis. The fundamental principle then is that the whole of experience or behavior is more than the sum of its parts. If any element changes, then there is a change in the whole person. The Gestalt school emphasized the principle that the development of values is, in part, a result of social (cont. p.19)

(Perceptions of School continued)

left--right under the office phone, used by teachers, administrators, student aides and parents. Although the drawer is marked with my name and "University Materials," there is no assurance of privacy. We began the dialogue anyhow.

At this point, I can offer some observations about the use of dialogue journals in a research project of this sort. As I hoped, the dialogues have provided an ongoing sense of my presence in the school, as well as a continuous record of their experiences and reactions to school and events. The use of the office drew the girls there for a positive reason, a change from the negative requests they are used to experiencing from administrators. Although I am not using the journals as a counseling tool, only as one method to gain information about how the girls viewed school, the journal writing has helped establish a personal connection between each girl and myself. Some wrote more than others, but our dialogues were always personal, and at least indicated to each girl that one adult was interested in her personally.

Already, preliminary analysis of the texts make clear that the girls wrote more about their personal lives than their reactions to school experiences--an indication of the relative importance of school in their world. I also believe that the dialogue journals allows the gathering of data on gender specific issues. Do girls write about the physical changes they experience during early adolescence? Do they write about treatment by teachers that seems discriminatory toward girls, or boys? What changing views of body image and self image can be traced in the dialogue journals of young adolescents?

Two other potential research uses of dialogue journals have surfaced during this study. One is how the dialogues can be used to learn culturally relevant information about school, family customs or culture patterns that impact on a student's school life. Second, can we gain information about the transition from one school to another during early adolescence? What information is revealed about individual adjustment, and the help given by the school, as perceived by the student? Dialogue journal communication can be a powerful instrument revealing information about these issues of gender concerns, cultural experiences, and school transitions. My own research-in-progress hints at their potential for investigation in these areas.

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conditioning.

The teacher who applies this principle is aware that myriad mental, physical, social, and emotional experiences all influence the ways students learn, act, and react in the classroom. Being aware of subtle nuances which produce various behaviors and achievements in the classroom which enables the teacher to better handle and grasp the inner motivations of her pupils.

Dialogue journal writing on a daily basis gave me the unique opportunity to "speak" to my students about their homes, neighborhoods, school, churches, friends, family, etc. Dialogue journals helped me with the gargantuan task of discovering the interests, values, cultural and ethnic aspects, biological and emotional needs, motivational drives, external and internal stimuli, and other considerations which make up the "whole" child.

A year ago I began a project with a below-average eighth grade class in a middle school within a large city school system. Many of my students had been retained, and thus were overage for the grade level. Several had lengthy records of discipline problems. Some were enduring very difficult conditions at home and in the neighborhood. Some needed desperately to "talk" to someone who had a genuine interest.

Since I could not sit down and actually have a personal conversation with each of my pupils every day, the dialogue journal became an extremely visible alternative. It was definitely a way to communicate in a personal and systematic way. If I actually got to know them better, could I then teach them better? Would I be able to handle discipline better? Could I make a real difference in their academic achievement? And most importantly of all could I get them into the habit of expressing their world through writing?

Some of the questions for which I sought answers in our dialogues: What is this child's self-picture? Has she attained self-approval and self-respect? What is her emotional temperament? Which aspects of her emotional repertoire are in operation during this period of her life? Is he concerned about actions or events which cause fear, worry, anger, annoyance, jealousy, or shame? Or is he feeling the emotions of love, happiness, joy, elation, satisfaction, or pleasure? I gained insights to these and other questions, and I began to discover the intricacies of adolescent behavior in relation to both in and out-of-school variables.

I am just at the beginning of analyzing my data. However, I already have some conclusions about what happened to me and my relationship with my students. Interacting within the dialogue journals allowed me to interact privately rather than publicly with certain personalities. Since we were continually "talking" to each other, we were continually adjusting our perceptions of each other and our understandings of each other. A teacher really needs all the help she can get, and benefitting from the interactions which surface during dialogue journal writing is really a "help" and definitely worth the extra effort.

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THE DIALOGUE JOURNAL IN A HIGH SCHOOL ENGLISH CLASS

Doris Armstrong

My research is on the use of dialogue journals during one semester in an "average" suburban high school English class. I asked my 11th grade students to keep a journal focused on classroom matters: responses to reading, drafts of writing assignments, interpersonal relations--anything having to do with the class, in both senses: people, and course of study.

As teacher/researcher, I did not structure the journals on a day-to-day basis. That is, although I allowed classroom time for writing, I did not give suggestions each day as to what to write about, other than to reiterate that "classroom concerns" should be the focus. I replied to the journal entries about once a week. There were no grades given for the journals.

I felt that much schoolwork is structured so as to inhibit students from the discovery, definition, and solving of problems, and with little actual engagement with the subject. Could this journal provide a field where, without fear of errors, a student's thoughts could play freely? Would the dialogue journal help resolve interpersonal problems?

I am now in the midst of the slow process of analyzing these journals, to see what is really there. A very wide variation in the amount of writing occurred. In a few dramatic instances personal difficulties between student and teacher were worked out in the journal, which may have blocked the student's work if left unresolved. And certainly some instances of growth in thinking about theme and character in literature occurred.

An example of personal difficulties dealt with in the dialogue journal follows. The annual attack of spring fever was causing considerable restlessness when one student, Pat, described her irritation with two boys in the class.

PAT: *The kids in this class (most) are a joke. I have put up with enough of Tom's or Bill's crude and dicusting comments. No one stands up to them, I'm personally sick of them, I'm not letting them walk over me, they can walk over you, but they will never walk over me as long as I'm here.*

ARMSTRONG (in margin): *I guess that's how it looks. Good for you.*

PAT: *I totally cannot concentrate w/ them constantly talking about things they do, (mostly w/ girls). I could even express myself in English and apply myself if I wasn't being held back by these two people. They are constantly holding our class back from many things & I'm sick of IT!*

ARMSTRONG: *You do very well anyhow-! Thanks for the feedback--I'll try harder to hold them down."*

The result, of course, was that as I succeeded in enforcing more order on these two, Pat was pleased and so was I. I might not have worked on this problem as effectively if Pat had not added her motivation to mine.

In contrast, another student, "Jack", used the dialogue journal for thinking about subject matter. He *(cont. p. 20)*

A STUDY OF STUDENT AND TEACHER LIBERATION THROUGH DIALOGUE JOURNALS

Hannah Winston
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Dialogue journals are allowing me to conduct two studies--how I as a teacher create and implement a "liberating pedagogy" for adolescents who are a-literate, and how these students, so unaccustomed to experiencing reading and writing as communication, develop their reasoning processes and voice through my teaching. The outcomes for both teacher and student are grounded in the concept of education as liberation--rather than oppression.

A "liberating pedagogy" flies in the face of the common practice, as John Goodlad documents it in A Study of Schooling, of exposing students in low tracks to "far less challenging material and less effective instructional practices because they are viewed as impoverished individuals lacking in intellect and unable to respond to challenges." Support from the Philadelphia Alliance for Teaching Humanities in the Schools (PATHS) and the University of Pennsylvania's Literacy Research Center has enabled me to develop and begin studying the effects of an interdisciplinary (reading, writing, speaking and literature) learning community in which low-performing secondary school students are encouraged to put language to use in meaningful and practical ways.

In practice, the learning community is a reading/writing workshop, which this year is investigating adolescent change in the students' own stories and in the works of Maya Angelo, Alice Walker, J.D. Salinger, Zora Neale Hurston, Claude Lewis, Ann Frank, Elie Wiesel, Margaret Mead, etc. Our in-class reading, writing and talking are tied together through the twice-a-week dialogues between each student and myself in dialogue journals.

The just-beginning study of my own development seeks to document and understand how I become a "liberatory educator" as suggested by Paulo Freire. The study of the students' work, including their dialogue journal entries, will focus on their discovery that they have a language and a voice in the struggle against inequality and will try to show how dialogue with a competent other (me) enables them to become more competent communicators within the zone of proximal development as described by Vygotsky.

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(Dialogue Journals continued from p. 19)

applied the Aristotelian concept of the tragic hero to the play All My Sons.

JACK: *I think Joe Keller fits ~~the~~ Aristotles Poetics definition of the change of fortune and character. His downfall is the ~~cause~~ result of a great error, letting the cylinders go cracked. He is a virtuous man who worked against adversity to prosperity. He is ~~known~~ highly renowned and prosperous.*

ARMSTRONG : *Well, yes--maybe not a King or Prince, though. Not even president of General Motors! What 'weakness' in his personality caused him to make this wrong decision?*

I would be happy to hear from other researchers who are analyzing dialogue journals, and exchange problems and possible solutions with them.

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COLLEGE STUDENTS WRITTEN REFLECTIONS ON LEARNING

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My research describes college student's reflections on their academic experiences presented in dialogue journals maintained during one semester, using the text of 10 journals.

Research in the area of reflection suggests new understandings and appreciations are reached when an experience is recaptured, thought about and evaluated. One way to enhance the learning experience is to strengthen the link between the experience and reflection by creating a specific activity following the experience. I have chosen to use dialogue journals to create this reflective moment. The replay of events and feelings can create an association, a connecting of the ideas and feelings which are part of the original experience and those which have occurred during reflection with existing knowledge and attitudes. The linking of new conceptions to existing cognitive structures and feeling is one of the central features of the learning process.

My assumptions are that the dialogue with the teacher may help to develop an awareness and a reflective approach to learning. The students can gain a sense of actively directing their own learning by isolating, developing, and refining issues, concern, and questions related to their study. Writing gives distance from the experience, which may have the effect of clarifying it and fostering the ability to work with it and learn from it. It helps students to take a look at the affective role of the learning process, to appreciate the role of their own feelings, and to clarify the feelings involved.

Specific research questions guiding the data analysis are:

- How does student self-concept reveal itself in, and influence student reflection in the dialogue journal?
- What type of academic experiences in the Communication skills class do students reflect on in their dialogue journals?
- What attributional strategies do students use in reflecting on academic experiences, in relation to achievements or failures in this class, and in relation to their overall studies?
- What types of teacher feedback in the dialogues influence student reflection on academic experiences and self-concept?

A constructivist approach will be used to carry out this study in order to interpret, explain and understand the patterns found in the dialogue journals.

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RELATED RESEARCH: THE EFFECTS OF WRITING ON HEALTH

James Pennebaker, a psychologist at Southern Methodist University, has been conducting a fascinating series of studies on the effects of writing about distressing life experiences on the body's immune function and general psychological health. In a 1987 APA presentation he has shared with us, he and his colleagues Kiecolt-Glaser and Glaser examined the efficacy of writing about traumatic experiences by having fifty healthy undergraduates randomly assigned to write either about personal traumatic events, or trivial topics for 20 minutes on each of five consecutive days, in a personal (non-dialogue) journal.

A number of measures of healthy functioning, including blood samples to measure immune system function, health center visits, and self-reports of subjective distress were taken before, immediately afterward, and at six weeks after the study. Autonomic activity (blood pressure, heart rate, etc.) was also measured each day during the study.

Pennebaker reports that writing down concerns and feelings led to positive results on the immune function tests, health center use, autonomic levels (which dropped day by day for the writing group), and subjective distress. Those who were asked to discuss only trivial pursuits got no benefits, and this difference held up after six weeks--the writers had made fewer doctor visits.

In a related study, Pennebaker and Beall found that writing about both emotions and facts surrounding a traumatic event was even more beneficial than an "emotions only" approach. Pennebaker cautions that the writers instructed to write about traumatic events were initially more distressed than those assigned to the trivial condition, but that long-term followup measures all favored the writing as a therapy approach.

He also points out that a major drawback of "writing therapy" is that this kind of private, non-interactive writing "does not allow for an objective outside opinion, support from others, or objective coping information." While this is true for the personal journal or diary, dialogue journals, when used appropriately, can also provide some of the benefits of feedback and counsel. Those of us who find that we are doing counseling in dialogue journals even when that wasn't the initial intent are probably doing more good than we realize.

We are interested in hearing about other research which pursues directly the therapeutic and psychosomatic benefits of written communication, and will share any such finds in future issues.

Pennebaker, J.W., Kiecolt-Glaser, J., & Glaser, R. Disclosure of traumas and immune functiaon: Health implication for psychotherapy. Paper presented at the 1987 Meeting of the American Psychological Association, Washington, D.C.

Pennebaker, J.W., & Beall, S.K. (1986). Confronting a traumatic event: Toward an understanding of inhibition and disease. Journal of Abnormal Psychology, 95, 3, pp. 274-281.

Leslee's Page

A TEACHER'S VIEW

Leslee Reed

Because my teaching position for many years was close to several colleges and universities, our school and its teachers were asked to assist in research programs almost constantly. The usual format was to meet with the Researcher, listen in silence to the plan and then of course, change or adjust our time schedules and groupings so that the mechanics of the testing or instruction could be matched to the requirements of the research plan. Participation consisted of following through on the classroom tasks, which were never related to my own instructional approach. The instrument or materials were usually made available to us afterward. Most often within two weeks a letter of appreciation would arrive. End of the project.

Fortunately for me, not all research worked just that way. In the many, many research studies with which I was involved, a few were very different, and they are the only ones that were really valid as far as my work was concerned. Not only was the research in each case undertaken in order to find out something about my own instruction, with a lot of explanation by me and to me, but my students were involved with the researchers over an extended period of time because their goals were to enhance the students' educational welfare as well as gather data.

Jana Staton was the type of researcher who came not knowing the answers and really not even sure of the questions. Her focus was on finding out what I was already doing in my classroom, not in asking me to carry out her new tasks. Through countless meetings, discussions and shared readings her project developed, but not in an iron-clad formula. This process of watching, studying, evaluating, discussing, revamping and starting over again and again allowed me to be a real part of the study as it developed. Our discussions were frequent and though we could only assess the "here and now" of what was happening, new ideas and new insights developed. The students were enriched by a caring classroom participant whom they grew to love and to trust. As a teacher, I was stimulated to see that what was going on was valuable and worthy of study.

This project grew and reached its goals, but instead of ending, it grew further and continued to involve me, showing me my own work from a totally different perspective so that I became a better person, and a better teacher. After Jana's work with me, Joy Kreeft Peyton became interested in the use of dialogue journals with my ESL students, and we continued the process I started with Jana.

A third research project with which I became involved has really never ended, either! This project was aimed at developing sustained silent reading for all students. The researcher, Gail Povey, and I agreed on the importance of sustained silent reading, and so the problem was how to inspire and stimulate the non-achieving student and the absolute "non-readers" in my class, to want to read. Again, the researcher became a regular visitor to the room, becoming acquainted with each student and getting to know the tastes of each member of the class. How very enriching that alone was! Her visits were anticipated and her various techniques for

(continued from p. 21)

"selling" a student on reading a book grew and grew. Just as I did with Jana, Gail and I had long talks, worked on plans for stimulating reading, discussed ideas that worked, discarded difficult ones planned anew and so it went. The frequent dialogue with both researchers was stimulating on a level that most teachers do not have. Our open and frank evaluation of the ways we perceived the study to be going was so enriching and so energizing for me.

In participating in these two studies, not only was I able to grow, but I was validated as a teacher and sustained in my belief that there is always more to learn. As a teacher, the frustration of not being able to reach students who have potential or who have never developed a yen for learning is constant. To have had two researchers who not only listened to my ideas, but built on them so that I and others could benefit has been a highlight of my teaching career.

Recent Dialogue Journal Publications

Dissertations

Gutstein, Shelley. 1987. Toward the assessment of communicative competence in writing: An analysis of the dialogue journal writing of Japanese adult ESL students. Georgetown University.

Articles

Braig, D. J. 1986. Six authors in search of an audience, In B. Schieffelin (Ed.) The acquisition of literacy: Ethnographic Perspectives. Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing, 110-131.

Farley, Jack W. 1986. An analysis of written dialogue of educable mentally retarded writers. Education and Training of the Mentally Retarded. Vol. 21, No. 3, pp. 181-191.

Farley, Jack L. & Susan L. Farley. 1987. Interactive writing and gifted children: Communication through literacy. Journal for the Education of the Gifted. Vol. 10, No. 2, pp. 99-106.

Peyton, Joy Kreeft. 1986. Interactive writing: making writing meaningful for language minority students. NABE News, Vol. 10, No. 1. pp. 19, 21.

Rueda, R., Flores, B., & Porter, B. 1986. Examining asssumptions and instructional practices related to the acquisition of literacy with bilingual special education students. In A.C. Willig & H.F. Greenberg (Eds.), Bilingualism and Learning Disabilities: Policy and practice for teachers and administrators. New York: American Library Publishing.

A BONUS: For DIALOGUE subscribers only, we will send our most recent list of publications and abstracts of the NIE grants and all completed dissertations on request, FREE!, if you will send a self-addressed, stamped envelope with postage to: DIALOGUE, CAL, 1118 22nd St., N.W., Washington, DC 20037. A complete list of publications on dialogue journals and research abstracts is included in the Special Issue #2 available from Handbook Press (see back page).

A SURVEY OF DIALOGUE JOURNAL USE IN THE ARLINGTON COUNTY ESOL/HILT PROGRAM

Joy Kreeft Peyton
Center for Applied Linguistics

Because dialogue journal use, and therefore research, is focused at the classroom level, we know relatively little about the extent and nature of its use at the school system level. As part of an extensive research project now in progress concerning dialogue journals use and effects (a project of the Center for Language Education and Research, funded by OERI), we collaborated with staff in the ESL program (called ESOL/HILT) in Arlington, Virginia to conduct a survey of teachers in their program in the spring of 1986. The survey responses provide an interesting picture of actual daily classroom use among ESL teachers.

Of those teachers who completed the survey, 19 (8 elementary, grades 3-6 and 11 secondary, grades 7-12) said they were using dialogue journals at the time, and all 19 said they intend to continue using them in future years. This represents about 20% of the teachers in the ESOL/HILT program, which encompasses both elementary and secondary levels. In response to questions concerning how long teachers have used them, the number of students involved and the frequency of use, responses show that: Most teachers have been using them since they first heard about them, with 60% using them for 2-3 years; elementary teachers keep dialogue journals with much smaller numbers of students (around 10 on the average), and most elementary teachers, who often work with small groups of students on a pull-out basis, do not keep dialogue journals with all of their students; about half keep them with fewer than half.

When do your students write in their dialogue journals?

Most secondary students write at the beginning of class, for about 10-15 minutes. Elementary HILT teachers have a little more flexibility because of longer class times, and some have their students write at any time during the day, again, for around 10-20 minutes.

How often do your students write? How often do you respond?

Most elementary students write 2-3 times a week, and in all cases the teacher responds each time the students write. In secondary classes the students write more often (every day in most classes), but because of the large number of students, most teachers usually respond only once a week. Two secondary teachers do respond each time the students write.

What are your purposes for using dialogue journals?

Elementary teachers' main purposes are to communicate with their students, to get to know them personally and understand them, to encourage free expression, to eliminate the stress and fear of writing, with language-related purposes of modeling language structures for students and stimulating growth in writing ability tending to be secondary. All teachers, elementary and secondary, express the desire to dispel fear of writing and to make writing more natural, communicative, and fun. Secondary teachers' main purposes tend to be to encourage free writing for thought development and to develop writing skills. Personal communication and getting to know students are secondary, although still very important, concerns for many teachers at the secondary level. Nearly all teachers (90%) believe they are accomplishing their purposes.

What benefits do you as a teacher receive from using dialogue journals?

Both groups of teachers cite the closeness with their students that develops and the knowledge of students (about life styles, problems, skills, and social needs) that is gained, which would not come from class writing assignments. The opportunity to monitor students' writing development is seen as a secondary benefit, but an important one to the secondary teachers.

What benefits do you think the students receive from using dialogue journals?

For elementary students, teachers mentioned these: students realize they can communicate in writing and see it as fun as well as work; they realize that someone in school cares about them; they gain confidence in their writing; they develop their ability to express thoughts and ideas fluently; and they develop thinking skills. Secondary teachers expressed the belief that one of their major purposes for dialogue journal writing, that students' thinking and writing skills improve, is in fact manifested in the students' writing. Secondary teachers also identified the personal relationship that develops and the students' increased willingness to communicate in writing as benefits.

What problems have you encountered in using dialogue journals?

Half of the teachers said they have encountered no problems. The major problem for others, especially secondary teachers, is the amount of time and work it takes. Most teachers are able to address this problem by reducing the number of students with whom they write or the number of times per week they and the students write. Teachers now using dialogue journals appear to have worked out a system that is comfortable for them.

Have you noticed any changes in the quality of your students' dialogue journal writing during one year? If so, what kinds of changes have you noticed?

Nearly all of the teachers (90%) believe they have seen changes in the quality of their students' dialogue journal writing. Both elementary and secondary teachers see growth in quantity of writing and freedom and creativity of expression, as well as level of interest of the writing. Two teachers write, "I see tremendous growth in their writing and ability to express themselves, moving from stilted sentences to free flowing expression. The children know they can share with me." "With most children the length of their entries increases. They eventually write about more interesting issues than when they first began. Many children notice their spelling errors after I model them, and structures are occasionally picked up from those that I use." Some also see improvement in English structure--sentence construction and complexity, grammar, spelling, and vocabulary.

Have you noticed any changes in the quality of your students' other writing during the year?

Many teachers (81%) also noticed changes in their students' other in-class writing, and half believe these changes can be attributed to the dialogue journal writing. Changes include better writing on the paragraph test and on written answers to content area questions (e.g., social studies textbook questions); generally freer, more interesting, and more expressive writing; better organization of thoughts and clear expression of ideas; and improved grammar, punctuation, and spelling.

Conclusions

From the results of this survey, a number of conclusions can be drawn about the practice of dialogue journal writing in the ESOL/HILT program in Arlington. First, it is a well-established practice. It is suggested in the curriculum guide as a valuable approach, and at least 20% of the teachers in the program were using them at the time the survey was completed. There are possibly more who did not complete the survey. Teachers started using dialogue journals when they first heard about them, most have continued using them for a couple of years since then, and all those using them at the time of this survey intend to continue using them. Reasons for not continuing the practice in most cases relate to uncontrollable circumstances, such as inappropriate class type and time limits, rather than a belief that the practice is not effective.

Second, it is a practice that teachers have picked up quite easily (after one or two workshops) and have been able to adapt to meet their own situations, goals, and needs. Dialogue journals are being used at a variety of different grade levels, in a variety of different types of classes, and for a variety of purposes. Teachers have worked out ways to use them which are manageable for them and effective in maintaining the dialogue. Some mentioned the amount of time it takes to respond as a possible disadvantage, but most teachers who responded have worked out a system in which they do have time and they are not overwhelmed. Teachers who were interviewed said that it is time well worth spending. As one teacher who has been using dialogue journals for three years put it, "If I didn't think it was worth the time we spend on it, I wouldn't do it."

Finally, dialogue journals serve a much broader purpose than simply the development of reading and writing abilities. Most teachers indicated that they believe their students' writing did in fact improve during the year (they were not asked about reading), and attribute this improvement at least in part to the use of dialogue journals. At the same time, however, teachers believe that the primary benefit of dialogue journals, to them and to their students, is the opportunity they have to communicate on a one-to-one basis with their students--something that would be impossible without the journals. While they concentrate on communicating, writing abilities develop as a secondary benefit. •

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DIALOGUE is the newsletter about the uses, benefits, and theory of dialogue journals, a practice of communicating in writing about topics of mutual interest through continuous, functional conversations between (usually) learners and teachers. This newsletter provides an informal means of sharing information, ideas and concerns among those who are using dialogue journals and studying their uses in the United States and in other countries. It is an outgrowth of two National Institute of Education research grants to study dialogue journal writing with native and non-native English speakers. The newsletter is now produced with partial support from the Center for Language Education and Research (CLEAR), which is funded by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement of the Department of Education. For information about dialogue journal research and practical applications or the work of CLEAR, write: Dialogue, CLEAR, Center for Applied Linguistics, 1118 22nd St., N.W., Washington, DC 20037.

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Dialogue

October, 1987

Editors: Jana Staton
Joy Kreeft Peyton
Shelley Gutstein

THE MANY BENEFITS OF DIALOGUE JOURNALS: HELPING STUDENTS CHANGE ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIORS

Jana Staton

One of the major benefits of dialogue journal use in educational settings is the opportunity to help individual students deal with attitudes, behaviors, anxieties or personal concerns which are limiting their performance or educational progress. Teachers and students usually mention such outcomes when asked about the value of dialogue journals, even when the major purpose is to improve students' literacy skills.

One sixth grade student--Eduardo--described this kind of interaction succinctly in an end-of-year interview: "Her words helped me not to fight, and so now I don't fight no more. She said 'Don't fight, because if you fight you just get into trouble.'"[1]

In this issue, we are focusing on a variety of outcomes which involve the larger dimensions of learning and action, such as learning to make more accurate attributions for success and failure instead of blaming others or fate, gaining courage to try and accomplish a difficult task, knowing that personal problems and concerns are understood, even if they can't be solved. Above all, these articles speak again to the essential need of students at all ages for a personal relationship with someone within the learning process, however that is achieved.

Not surprisingly, many of the accounts in this issue involve older elementary, secondary or adult students. By 11 or 12, a student's attitudes, beliefs, motivation and personal situation, including family problems, are major factors influencing their learning, and the responsibility for change lies increasingly with the student, not with family or teachers. Students as well as teachers know it is important to manage their feelings and concerns so that learning can take place.

In focusing on this one benefit of dialogue journal use, the question comes up again, are dialogue journals used for "counseling?" Usually this question is raised by teachers who are themselves uncomfortable with moving too far beyond the confines of their academic area, and are concerned about opening the door to students' personal problems. In fact, dialogue journal conversations are *not* useful as a means for doing open-ended therapy, even if the teacher is also a qualified, licensed therapist. What they *are* useful for is working through concerns and problems related to classroom issues and actions, and for acknowledging our common humanity when personal crises occur.

Some Ethical Concerns

Some of our readers are already aware that diaries, personal journals and autobiographical writing in general are included on lists of "sensitive subjects" which some parent groups are circulating and asking school boards to ban from the classroom.

Our survey of the actual practice of dialogue journal use shows that teachers can and should establish appropriate limits on the topics for discussion, so that students are not encouraged to bring up any and all concerns, which may be appropriate only in therapeutic settings. We have also heard of recent cases (one on "60 Minutes" recently) where teachers *assigned* highly personal topics for students to write about in their personal journals [we have not heard of *dialogue* journals being used in this way], and then asked the students either to turn the journals in to be read by the teacher, or to share their entries aloud with classmates. In our view, assigning highly personal topics does not give students the right of choice and may constitute an invasion of privacy. For that reason, we stress over and over the essential right of students to CHOOSE the topics which they will initiate and discuss in a private dialogue journal, and to drop the discussion of any topic which may come up and they do not want to pursue.

(cont. p. 2)

(Benefits, cont. from p. 1)

The teacher has the right to establish a framework for the general dialogue, but not to require or suggest topics which may require self-disclosure of private information or feelings about experiences outside the classroom. However, students do have the right to bring up such concerns spontaneously, within such general frameworks, and to explore their meaning.

Having been cautionary, we should say also that competent teachers *are* able to assist students with reasoning about how to succeed in school, and in thinking through the causes of success and failure. Teachers are also most effective in increasing academic performance when each student feels that he or she is known and valued as a unique individual, and that important personal concerns are known and understood by the teacher. Anxiety and stress, whether caused by school situations or from other sources, directly affect school performance, and good teacher-student communication can be of enormous value in helping students.

[1] Writing and Counseling: Using a Dialogue Journal. Jana Staton, *Language Arts*, May 1980. •

"So Now I'm a Motivated and Changed Person"

"I really feel alot better about myself and my life." Any teacher would like to read those words from a student in a dialogue journal. But Jean Allen, an experienced physical education teacher in Fairfax County, Virginia, did not expect them from the "problem student" she had this past school year. "Sharon" had already failed two quarters of PE in another teacher's class, and she was also skipping other classes and failing all her academic subjects. When the Principal asked Jean if the student could switch to Jean's PE class in the middle of the third quarter, Jean was unsure: How could she make a difference in this girl's attitude and get her to understand that the basics--like regular attendance, dressing in gym clothes and doing what was asked--were going to matter in this class as well?

Jean had heard about the dialogue journal use by administrators and teachers to help at-risk students in a neighboring intermediate school in Fairfax County (see *Opportunities for Genuine Communication*, this issue), and decided it might help her work with this girl. So they began, with at least one exchange a week, in early March. A lot of their dialogues were about the girl's new boyfriend, and her interests in a career as a hairdresser and in marriage, but along the way, Jean managed to bring up the topic of why PE had been so difficult for her, and to help Sharon acknowledge her own responsibility for her difficulties, as well as expressing the problems she had with the particular instructor.

Allen: *Why is Physical Education a subject that you have had some difficulty in passing?*

Sharon: *PE is just something I didn't like when I had* ____________ *as a teacher, she made it very hard for me because of her comments and actions. In elementary I had fun in PE because for one you didn' have to dress out, for two I knew and liked everyone because they were in my class. Jr. High [PE] I hated and refused to go to because of a few people in that class. High School I hated because of [that teacher] but since I've been in your class I don't mind going or dressing out.*

Allen: *I've often wondered what turns students off from P.E. In Elementary school everyone loves P.E., but starting at the Jr. High level there is a real change with students.....I'm sure a teacher's attitude toward students makes a big difference. There has to be some mutual respect, classroom guidelines and sense of being able to forgive (not hold a grudge) against students (or teachers) when discipline is needed.*

By the end of the year, Sharon was able to go back to the other P.E. teacher and discuss her concerns. She had come to recognize her role in the difficulty, as well as the teacher's contribution to it. Best of all, she went from an F to an A in P.E., and also made passing grades in her other subjects. While her dialogue journal documents that finding a boyfriend was clearly a major factor in her turnaround, this personal dialogue with a P.E. teacher also contributed to her changed attitude toward school, an attitude she recognized in the rather accurate self-description toward the end: "So now I'm a motivated and changed person."

A letter from the girl's parents to Miss Allen supports the student's statement: "If you had not accepted her and taken a chance on her, she would not have done as well as she has. Because of the support and help you gave her, she did a complete turnaround." •

HELPING STUDENT TEACHERS AND STUDENTS WITH ADVERSIVE ATTITUDES

Robert Bahruth and Amy Howell
The University of Texas at Austin

How does one get a teacher "started" with dialogue journals? All too often, teacher inservices do not seem to be the best setting for presenting this idea. The teachers who attend are either doing a fine job in their classrooms already, or are merely filling a seat and are unreceptive to new ideas. One solution, which has developed through my position at the University of Texas as a student teacher supervisor/instructor, has been to introduce the concept and use of dialogue journals at the beginning of a student teacher's career. Besides being an excellent time to introduce a new philosophy and approach, this period of time involves particular stresses for the student teacher, which a personal dialogue can help alleviate.

Newcomers to the profession are most often enthusiastic, but also intimidated by the student teaching experience. When behavioral or curricular problems present themselves in the classrooms of these student teachers, they are often lost or confused, and I have found them to be most receptive at this point to any suggestions I might provide. For this reason, one of my requirements for the course is for the student teachers to write a dialogue journal with me. Of all student teachers who have been introduced to the dialogue journals in this way, most have experimented with them during their student teaching experience, have expressed positive regard for them, and have decided to continue using them once they have a classroom of their own.

Through these journals I can achieve three important ends. First, I am able to acquaint them with the dialogue journal as a teaching and counseling tool through first-hand experience. Second, I am able to allay many of their fears and hesitations about the experience of student teaching, so they are able to relax and do a better job with more self-confidence. Finally, I can help them to see the utility of dialogue journals for meeting the needs of individual students. I believe that the two major sources of discipline problems in classrooms are situations where a student is frustrated and therefore disenchanted with learning and expresses this through off-task behavior, or where a student is bored because there is no challenge and likewise reacts with negative behavior. I think we would all agree that it is not just underachievers, but bright students as well who are potential problems.

One student teacher in a third grade classroom, Amy Howell, had a hostile student in her classroom who was causing her great difficulty. We discussed in our own journal the idea of starting a dialogue journal with "Tommy." In her next journal entry to me she wrote:..."I talked to Tommy about writing to me in a journal. He really liked the idea! He even asked me when he could get started. I think your idea is really going to work."...

For fear of having coerced her into adopting my favorite approaches, I responded: ..."I'm pleased to see that you are so receptive to suggestions. You don't have to use everything I suggest, but if something strikes you as fitting your style of teaching, by all means give it a try. ....Have you started a journal with Tommy yet?".... To this she responded: ..."I'm really excited about Tommy and his journal. He really loves it. His behavior has improved 100%. Thank you so much for giving me the idea."... Finally, I answered: "I'm pleased to hear that Tommy has responded so favorably. It seems like [your cooperating teacher] is very interested in dialogue journals as well. I think they work because they are humanistic and allow the children to express themselves meaningfully."...

It is interesting to note that through the dialogue journal Amy was effective, for the duration of her student teaching experience, in addressing Tommy's individual needs. She helped to recover a child who was potentially at risk of being squeezed out of the school system. Her system in the dialogue journal was flexible and met the needs of the child, and the child responded. In fact, Tommy signed his second journal entry to Amy, "Your friend Tommy who is trying to stay out of trouble." Hence, I prefer the term "squeezed out" instead of "dropped out" to describe the experience of many high risk students, as I have witnessed time and again the response of these students to an inflexible system.

The cooperating teacher, who may not have been receptive to the idea of dialogue journals originally, by having witnessed their effectiveness first-hand, ended up considering using them in her classroom as well. This was another aspect of the serendipity of dialogue journal writing. •

TWO Q&A FACT SHEETS ON DIALOGUE JOURNALS!

Two new, up-to-date fact sheets have just been issued by the ERIC system, to provide information about dialogue journal use in an easily digestible, brief form, complete with excerpts from real dialogue journals.

Multiple copies are available FREE to anyone giving workshops, inservice training or conference presentations. Both fact sheets include a list of recent dialogue journal articles and books. Personal interviews with the authors reveal that both publications are "excellent," "to the point," and "very useful." PLEASE NOTE that these are not available from DIALOGUE; write to the ERIC Clearinghouse listed for each.

DIALOGUE JOURNALS (by Jana Staton) is a two-page ERIC Digest which presents rationales and approaches for dialogue journal use in classrooms as a means of increasing student-teacher communication and encouraging functional literacy. Questions discussed are:

- What is a dialogue journal?
- What are some of the benefits?
- What about the time it takes?
- How can I find out more?

For multiple copies, free of charge, write to:
ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and
Communication Skills
1111 Kenyon Road
Urbana, IL 61801

Q&A ON DIALOGUE JOURNAL WRITING WITH LIMITED-ENGLISH-PROFICIENT (LEP) STUDENTS (by Joy Kreeft Peyton) is a four-page overview of dialogue journal use with ESL students. It answers the following questions:

- What is a dialogue journal?
- What are the benefits to students and teachers?
- With what kinds of ESL students can dialogue journals be used?
- How do I get started?

For multiple copies, free of charge, write to:
Bill Code, User Services Coordinator
ERIC Clearinghouse on Languages and
Linguistics
1118 22nd Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20037

OPPORTUNITIES FOR GENUINE COMMUNICATION AT THE SECONDARY LEVEL

Jana Staton

Student: *At first I thought she was mean to me [at the start of this year] and then I got to know her.*

Int: *You wouldn't call her mean now?*

Student: *No, not now. I got to understand her.... In the dialogue journal, it has helped me a little bit. Like when I feel like I'm about to get in trouble, and I want to go talk to her and she's not there, I just go ahead and write it.*

- Eighth Grade student

Dialogue journals have been adopted by teachers at the elementary level as a unique means of combining communication with students and functional uses of writing and reading. At the secondary level, however, basic literacy development [at least for English-speaking students] is often a less significant concern than developing real communication to help students with attitudes and behavior. At the secondary level, the heavy student load, tight scheduling and increasing emphasis on objective knowledge all combine to make it more difficult for even motivated teachers to get to know students individually.

At Sandburg Intermediate School (7th-8th grades) in Fairfax County, Virginia, a pilot project now beginning its 3rd year has been exploring the feasibility of using dialogue journals to develop two-way, personal channels of communication about academic concerns, personal needs and social relationships between faculty and junior high students who need this extra support. The project has focused on the use of dialogue journals in the areas of changing attitudes, expectations, and behavior, rather than the more common goals of developing writing and reading abilities which may predominate at elementary levels and in ESL programs. This focus may include changes in teacher expectations and understanding as well as changes in student attitudes, behaviors (such as attendance) and school achievement as a result of improved student-teacher communication.

A second major goal of the project has been to identify and find ways of overcoming the logistical constraints or barriers to establishing effective dialogue

(cont. p. 5)

(Opportunities, cont. from p. 4)

journal communication which seem to be inherent in secondary school instructional and scheduling patterns.

After a year of training, consultation and encouragement, a survey of the Sandburg faculty showed that 23% of the faculty and staff have been actively involved in using dialogue journals during the 1986-87 school year. The academic and administrative areas involved include mathematics, learning disabled, English, counseling staff, and administrators, as well as individual teachers who selected one student for a mentoring relationship. In addition, faculty and students who participated in a three-day leadership training conference used the dialogue journals for that intensive period of time. The total number of students involved for at least one grading period or longer during 1986-87 was over 170, about 20 percent of the student population. The number of students a faculty member responded to ranged from 1 to 20.

Teachers and students are generally very positive about its value as a means of communication, but teachers are still finding the logistics of using the dialogue journal at this level are difficult. Dialogue journal communication may require re-examination of overall goals and the ways in which the instructional program is structured -- not an easy task for an individual teacher to take on, no matter how motivated!

Two Case Studies

The use of dialogue journals at Sandburg, as elsewhere, depends on the faculty volunteering and developing creative uses within their own areas of responsibility. Two different patterns of use illustrate the kinds of opportunities dialogue journals have provided.

Basic Math Classes. Several math teachers chose their basic math classes for dialogue journal use, focusing on encouraging more questions about assignments and on providing reassurance and positive feedback to students. The basic math classes at Sandburg are composed of students who lack skills to go beyond simple arithmetic operations or who lack motivation to work at math, with a good sprinkling of new ESL students whose English language skills are not yet advanced enough to enable them to succeed in regular math classes. Because motivation and involvement are so central for success in these classes, the use of dialogue journals as a way of motivating and involving individual students was particularly appropriate.

Interviews with math teachers and students brought the following typical comments about the use of dialogue journals.

Student: I liked it because I could ask questions. There's always a line at the teacher's desk in class, and it's hard to get answers, and so I don't ask questions in class. But I do in the journal, and then she could answer it, or explain something I didn't understand.

***

Student: Sometimes we argued about when I refused to do my work. I'd be mad when I came in and I'd write about it. I'd tell her that I didn't like her. She'd write back that I should do my work so I could make good grades. It helped to let her know how I felt.

***

Teacher: I find many of these students lack personal motivation; a large part of my job centers around keeping them interested and involved. Many of them cope with difficulties by simply not trying. Most of them are still very afraid to speak out in class with their questions. They will tell me in the dialogue journals that they are "dumb" and don't want anyone to know it, so they sit quietly in class.

Helping an Individual Student. An Assistant Principal at Sandburg employed the written dialogues to help a student assigned to her because of disciplinary problems. "Karen," an intelligent, articulate, very assertive girl with leadership and academic potential, was placed under special administrative supervision because of numerous conflicts with her teachers. A difficult home life and hostility to "authority figures" contributed to her ongoing conflicts and poor academic performance.

Karen was required to "check in" each morning between class periods with the Assistant Principal at Sandburg, Carol Robinson. Carol arranged for her to pick up their dialogue journal and bring it back the same day after writing in it during an English class (with the consent of that teacher.) The journal was exchanged one to two times a week in this manner.

The student and Assistant Principal formed a strong friendship rather quickly through their written dialogue. One immediate outcome of the dialogue journal communication was that Karen became more comfortable talking with Carol.

(cont. p. 6)

(Opportunities, cont. from p. 5)

They began having "let's talk" meetings every other week or so, discussing topics first introduced in the journal and others which came up. The assistant principal felt this kind of informal meeting would have been impossible without the foundation of mutual trust and understanding created through the written dialogue.

Carol summarized her view of Karen and their interactions:

"When I think of Karen at the start of the year and I think of her now, there is really a different image. She's made such progress. She has always had difficulty with anyone in authority. One day after we started the dialogue journal, one of the office staff saw her standing by my door and asked her if she needed anything. 'No, I'm just waiting for Miss Robinson. She's my *friend*.'

"We went for a period of over a week without communicating when I was on leave, and she came flying into my office the next day and said, 'Where's the book? I haven't seen the book in a week. I want to *talk* to you!' There was something that happened the day before, and she wanted to expand on it."

Karen, in her interview at the end of the year, explained that she valued the dialogue journal and the relationship it had created because she didn't feel most people understood her, either at school or in her family. She said she thought that Carol was also "just mean at the first of the year. Then I got to know her....I got to understand her." She pointed out that "when I feel like I'm about to get in trouble, and I want to go talk to her and she's not there, I just go ahead and write it."

Comments

This pilot project highlights the potential for significantly improving individual relationships between students and teachers through instituting a personal written conversation, but it also points to ingrained constraints and difficulties. The climate and social context at junior and senior high school require an increasingly strong orientation toward accomplishing academic goals for groups of students, which can reduce the focus on individual students' concerns and interests, even those directly related to academic performance. Some teachers who were very enthusiastic about the concept found that the actual practice required more commitment of time than they were willing to give, or that it required too much vulnerability and openness, asking them to go beyond the confines of the academic knowledge they wanted to impart. The pressures to separate knowledge from individual experience and person-ness which begin to dominate by the secondary level may make it more difficult to incorporate a means of communication. Dialogue journal communication requires integration rather than separation of personal and academic knowing.

Dialogue journal communication has the potential to affect positively student aspirations and achievement, *if* a genuine conversation can be maintained within which to ask questions, seek advice, listen to other points of view, express feelings and reflect on events. If personal support for academic achievement is a key to student success in school (and particularly so for students from minority ethnic or linguistic backgrounds), then the logistical and attitudinal constraints encountered by teachers in trying to use dialogue journals are worth more attention. Despite these difficulties, individual faculty members at Sandburg and elsewhere have found that having a direct, private means of communication with students is still able to make a significant difference.

> *"I can't point to anything in the content of the dialogue--sometimes the kids don't even bring up the big problems at all--but I know that the quality of my interaction with these particular kids has changed. When there is a problem, and they come in, we get down to talking about it quicker, and they seem to come in just to talk to me more often. It's like we have established a floor, a place to stand on together."*
>
> \- Guidance counselor •

"What we have here is technically impressive, Jason, but regrettably lacking in passion."

Leslee's Page

FINDING TIME TO TALK *PRIVATELY*: A RARE GIFT

Leslee Reed

There are times in every classroom when the teacher feels that he/she should be an octopus--one hand (tentacle?) on the intercom, one hand to accept the absence excuse, one hand to tally the lunch count, another to be certain that the form from the nurse's office is given to the right student, yet another to accept the firmly grasped bunch of flowers being brought to you, and oh, yes, get the attendance cards completed at once, all of this while beginning the classroom day. It is such a comfort, while all this is going on, to have the entire class reading their journals, finding out what the teacher had to say just to them, and then busily responding to that answer, or writing about something which happened at home that must be shared. This on-going written conversation has so many "side-benefits"!

How many times has every teacher wished she/he could *very privately* speak to a student who appears to be acting out an emotion or feeling that is counter productive to his/her own well being and to the class as a whole? How little time for privacy in conversation! Classes must be on schedule and time allotments met. Experience tells us that speaking to a disruptive student with the entire class able to listen in seldom accomplishes very much. All too often, the pent up feelings of the transgressor are just locked up tight. Daily exchange in our dialogue journals manages to fill the need for private negotiation very well. I can give a simple recapitulation of what I observed and affirm that the student must have been under some pressure or problem that caused that reaction. This affirmation (and information from an observer) opens the door to allow the student to vent his or her side of the issue, and to add information I may not have. From a teacher viewpoint, I may have been totally unaware of the student's problem and saw only the results. How helpful it is to know both sides of the story! Then, when the problem is better identified, a solution can be sought together. Try as we will to offer solutions, until we really know the problem it just does not help. By using dialogue journals, not only do we solve the teacher's problem of maintaining classroom decorum, but we also assist students by allowing them to be a major part of the problem's solution. validates their thinking and gives them a part in identifying the problem so that they, too, can search for a solution.

Second, dialogue journal writing helps the bilingual student negotiate this new culture. Having worked with many bilingual and multilingual students whose language proficiency varied from the simple smile as a greeting and only form of communication to the student who can speak two languages well and is now learning English, I have found that the privacy and permission to make an error without embarrassment or ridicule is readily granted in the privacy of the dialogue journal. Frequently the parents are even less able to speak English than the student, so the student is expected to carry messages for them to school. It is one thing to rehearse the speech or question at home, and a very different thing to get the teacher's undivided attention long enough to relay that information without someone else hearing, butting in or making a rude comment later. With the assured privacy and the sure knowledge that the message will be read, the journal relieves much of that tension. Even if it is incorrectly worded, misspelled or grammatically wrong, the teacher/correspondent will not only read it but can react in writing away from prying eyes and ears. Such privacy goes a long way in allowing the beginning English learner to not only practice the new language, but also to write with the assurance that the teacher's attention has been gained.

Our normal pattern of learning English--first hearing, then speaking, then reading, and finally writing seems ideal until we remember that our bilingual students do know what needs to be said; their problem is just how to say it. By writing it before speaking it, they have the opportunity to practice and to see the answer in writing before they have to orally state the issue. Reading the response allows them to check their concept of the way something should be said and to either make corrections or to at least see how corrections should be made. Many students have felt this step gave them a lot of security.

One of the best classroom management benefits that the dialogue joural provides for the teacher is the daily feedback about the lessons taught. Inviting critical comments about the teaching does not open up a Pandora's box. It simply makes possible sharing ideas about how effective certain techniques may be for each individual and makes the learner a part of the process of learning. Students can tell us if

(cont. p. 8)

DIALOGUE JOURNALS AT HOME

Joann Builta
Fairfax County Public Schools

As an extension of our regular classroom dialogue journal activity, I began a home journal writing project during our Christmas holiday. The parents of my second graders were asked to respond in writing to their children's journal writing, as I had been doing in class. My objectives were two-fold: to maintain developing student skills in this most personal type of writing that helps put children in touch with their feelings, and secondly, to provide opportunities for parent involvement and to encourage communication with the students. It was my hope that parents would enjoy reading the children's journals and would not only see this as a meaningful use of written language, but would appreciate the insights journals offer as well.

My inspiration to include parents began in November, when a speaker at a PTA meeting in our school quoted alarming statistics about a lack of quality communication among family members. Because I was, at that very moment, experiencing such a satisfying exchange of information with my students, I began to think I might share the dialogue journal activity with the children's families.

In December I sent home a letter explaining the dialogue journal and requesting that the children continue writing in their journals during our two-week Christmas holiday. I also asked parents, when possible, to respond in writing as I had been doing. I hoped that parents would not only observe firsthand their child's developing reading/writing skills, but would also gain new insights into their child's personality and promote more effective communication between home and school.

I was gratified that we had 100% student participation in the holiday journal writing project and that 75% of the parents wrote comments as I had suggested. Every parent responded to a follow-up survey in early January and, after analyzing the data, I would call the home project a resounding success. In fact, two parents liked it so much they commented that they would like to participate in similar projects in the future.

Parents reported that most children only needed to be reminded "sometimes" to write, and 89% felt their children enjoyed it. All but one parent found it enjoyable and reported that they learned more about their child through this communication link (just what I had hoped).

I would not hesitate to do this home project again because of the positive response to the survey. Next time, I would be clearer about the need for an adult written response for each student entry, with the child, in turn, reacting to the response, to allow for a more meaningful cumulative dialogue. I would also stress the importance of stimulating the children to write questions, which research has shown is essential to learning. I am now seeing more student questions in class as the children have become more accustomed to the dialogue journal. Also, as the children mature, I am beginning to see more communication about feelings and problems which allows me to provide counseling in my written feedback. I might mention these possibilities to the parents. One other point I would make to the parents is that this improvisational type of journal writing, where we overlook spelling and mechanics, is only one kind of writing we do in class. So that parents will not think such skills are being ignored, I would make it known that the children do have other opportunities to become aware of and learn conventions of written language through revising and editing their writing meant for publication. •

(Finding Time, cont. from p. 7)

lessons are too easy or too hard, are like something they studied thoroughly the year before, or are just far from their realm of interest at this age. All these are valuable clues to the aware teacher that here are students who want to be a part of the total learning process and will profit from a particular change. Plans made with the students in mind usually result in lessons with greater validity and effectiveness.

The personal quality of the dialogue journal, with all of the privacy and the respect for each person that it entails, provides the teacher with insights and knowledge that enrich and empower the total teaching process. •

> "A social membrane surrounds each human being, simultaneously separating one from and connecting one to the rest of one's living world....What if all our bodies are part of a much larger body--the communal body of mankind? Is human dialogue really a replacement for the umbilical cord we lose at birth, a tethered lifeline that continues to unite us all after birth?" --James Lynch, *The Language of the Heart.*

DIALOGUE JOURNALS AMONG FRIENDS

Zoe Burman

My experience with dialogue journals began in the 7th grade. My teacher wrote in journals with most of the students. These journals were her way of keeping up with our lives and of encouraging us to write. After that course had ended and I wasn't sharing the journal with my teacher anymore, I felt the need to continue writing. I began writing in a private diary, but it wasn't as much fun. I wrote only sporadically, and I missed the feedback from another writer.

Journaling with my friends started spontaneously in the 8th grade when I found that one of my very best friends wasn't in any of my classes. This made it difficult for us to exchange notes, as we had done before, and even harder for me to stay close with her, since I hardly ever saw her. Our journal actually began over Thanksgiving, while she was vacationing in Florida. I had promised to write notes to her, and found it was easier to keep them in a notebook, which I wouldn't lose. When she got back, I gave her the notebook, and she had a record of what I had been doing, thinking and feeling while she had been gone. She wrote back, and we continued our journaling through the whole year.

After that, I started keeping journals with two more of my closest friends. We wrote journals together for reasons similar to those mentioned above: We weren't in many classes together and we wanted to stay in touch.

For a long time then, I wrote a dialogue journal with each of three friends. We wrote whenever we could, and slipped the notebooks into each other's lockers or exchanged them when we passed each other in the halls. Of course, we spent as much time as possible together after school, but the journals were an added connection of closeness between us. They kept us in tune with each other.

Our notebooks were filled with gossip, babbling, inconsequential news, sayings, song lyrics...anything we felt like writing, anything we wanted to tell each other, anything we could think of to amuse each other. Of course, our love lives were a very important topic. We wrote funny lines, like "Party down, dude!" or "Hi, Honey!" or "It's broken in half!"; things we had picked up somewhere. We even included commercial jingles: "Yes, I am a lucky dog!" and "It's not easy...being cheesy!" We shared what we were doing in our lives:

Hi! I'm having so much fun! (sarcasm here). I'm babysitting--whoa. Too exciting. The kids are asleep and I'm just watching "Love Boat"--that great show.

Our journals were filled with artwork as well. We doodled, drew caricatures, colored in hearts and made funny pictures, both on the covers of the notebooks and throughout the pages. The journals were a place where we could "let it all out."

As for journal "rules" there really weren't any formal ones. Generally, the turn-around time was anywhere from a day to a week, but not much longer or an apology was in order, accompanied by a nice, *long* entry. If we had a lot to say, though, we kept the journals just as long as we needed to.

For my friends and myself, the dialogue journals were a way of staying close when our class schedules and our busy lives made this difficult. The journals were a record of our lives during those years, and helped us develop and retain our friendships. They were a sure means of communicating and made a real difference in our lives. •

Zoe Burman is now a senior at H. B. Woodlawn, an alternative secondary school in Arlington, Virginia. She is a teaching aide in a creative writing class there, and also co-teaches French at an elementary school in Arlington, She is active in Volunteer Services, The Community as School Project, and many additional extra-curricular activities.

Aa Bb
Tucker

"Here's my book report. Please read it in a leisurely way, to enjoy the style as much as the content."

REPORT FROM SURINAME ON DIALOGUE JOURNAL USE

Robby Morroy, who completed his doctoral studies at Georgetown University in 1985 and was a researcher on the Kreeft et al. dialogue journal study, reports that he has continued to use dialogue journals in a training course for teachers of English as a second language since his return to Suriname in the Fall of 1985. He has lectured on the use of dialogue journals and written many articles that have been published in Suriname.

Robby's forthcoming article, to be published in Suriname in August, discusses the value of dialogue journal writing for giving students practice with various styles of written Dutch, the official language of Suriname. Robby summarizes his article as follows.

> "Dutch is a standard language in which we can distinguish five styles (those that Joos, 1967 outlined for English): intimate, casual,consultative, formal, frozen. Shuy has shown that these styles can be seen as lying along a developmental continuum, with intimate and casual styles learned first and used early in the home, before a child goes to school. Most children learn the consultative style of a language when they go to school.
>
> "In Suriname, most students speak either Sranan or Sarnami at home and learn Dutch only at school. This means that they do not have the chance to practice the intimate and casual styles of Dutch before they must learn more formal styles. When a dialogue journal, written in Dutch, is used in school, Sranan and Sarnami speakers get to practice these more informal styles.
>
> "What the dialogue journal does in this context is to expand the style continuum of the Sranan and Sarnami speakers. These speakers often misuse Dutch style, that is, they use a certain style in an inappropriate situation because they have a narrow style range in this language. By using the dialogue journals students come into contact with the previously unfamiliar informal styles of Dutch. Their style range in Dutch is expanded and the occurrence of style misuse drops significantly.
>
> "Dialogue journals, therefore can be an effective tool for carrying out the Government's language policy, which is to promote the appropriate use of the official language, Dutch."

Robby uses dialogue journals in his classes at the Teacher Training College, training students to teach English at the secondary level. He asked his students to write down what they thought about dialogue journals. We print here a few of their responses.

Dorinda (27 years old):

When we started last year with the dialogue journal, it was quite new; it was something I had never dealt with before, but in the long run I even began to enjoy it. Even though the beginning was in a way "trying not to make mistakes," the teacher we were corresponding with gave us the feeling that mistakes wouldn't make any difference. Of course he didn't cross out those mistakes with a red ball-pen, but he gently corrected them in his answers; sometimes by giving examples.

It is a way to express yourself, knowing that there is someone who reads what you have written and who will give comments which will force you to discuss matters on paper.

Heswine (21 years old):

I think the dialogue journal mainly helps to establish a good relationship between the teacher and the student. It is an intimate and private way for the student to communicate with her teacher. This can be done without the fear of being overheard or without having to look at the teacher. Since some people do not like to do so because they are shy (like I am) and if it were not for the journal they might never have spoken a word to their teacher and he would never know what was going on inside of them.

Rudy (27 years old):

I can discuss this matter from two points of view. A positive approach and a negative one. I think it contributes to many things. It enables you to develop skills in thinking and writing rapidly. It makes communicating easier. It gives you the feeling that you are really busy in the language. For those reasons I appreciate the dialogue journal very much.

But on the other hand I experience it as a hard work. Especially when you are not in a merry mood, or when there is no available subject to talk about. Then it is not easy to find the words. •

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Suriname, S.A.

DIALOGUE JOURNAL PRESENTATIONS AT TESOL '87

Dialogue journals were well-represented at the TESOL conference in Miami Beach, Florida this year, with seven presentations, covering a wide range of different student populations and various modifications of the original approach. The student populations covered included student teachers in a teacher training course, college students (both hearing and deaf), elementary school students, and young children developing beginning literacy skills. Both teacher-student and student-student journals were used, and topics for the writing were both open-ended and focused on specific course content.

Using Dialogue Journals in Teacher Training

Suzanne Irujo described the use of dialogue journals in Project BELT (Bilingual Education Leadership Training), an in-service ESL and bilingual teacher training project at Brown University. The purpose of the journals was to provide accountability in doing assigned readings and feedback to the teachers about how they were doing in the course. Teachers were asked to use the journals to reflect upon and respond to the readings. Because the journals were presented in this way, some of the teachers merely summarized the readings, and true dialogue was slow to develop in a few cases. Overall, however, the journals had very positive effects. In addition to reacting to course readings, teachers used their journals to comment on the implementation of new techniques, clarify ideas, reflect on themselves as teachers, ask advice, express opinions about the course, apply new knowledge to their own and their students' experiences, and as an outlet for venting frustrations. The teachers reacted enthusiastically to the journals; they commented particularly on their usefulness as an aid to thinking and as a means of receiving more individual attention. Based on this experience, it was suggested that in future use of dialogue journals in teacher training, the journals not be used as a means of ensuring accountability, and that teachers not be directed explicitly to use them to react to the readings, in order to allow more genuine dialogue to develop.

(Note: In a subsequent ESL methodology course with a different group of in-service teachers, no explicit instructions were given about the topic for the writing. Teachers were simply asked to write about anything they wanted to, and to follow the dialogue wherever it led them. All of the functions mentioned above were present, plus more genuine dialogue and more personal entries, and the teachers reacted even more enthusiastically to the journals.)

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Semantic/Rhetorical Patterns and Two Types of Dialogue Journals

Margaret Steffensen reported on a study in which aspects of American culture were taught through a dialogue journal focused on a regional novel. Eleven ESL students in a university-level composition course spent two class hours a week reading *So Long, See You Tomorrow* by William Maxwell and writing their reactions to it in their journals. The instructor, acting as a "cultural negotiator," answered student questions and corrected errors, both those that were explicit in the writing and those that could only be inferred on the basis of the instructor's knowledge of the student's cultural background. She prompted comparisons with the students' native cultures and encouraged inferencing and evaluation of the characters and behaviors in the novel.

A control group of twelve ESL students spent two hours weekly on reading and studying skills in the university's Learning Assistance Center and the classroom. They did not read the novel, and during about thirty minutes of class time, they wrote in a dialogue journal on any topic that was of interest to them.

Langer (1984) has shown that a word association task involving key concepts from a text can be used to assess background knowledge and schema development, which underlie comprehension of that text. In this study, it was predicted that by the end of the semester responses to concepts related to the themes of the novel (which cover general cultural concepts such as friendship and childhood) would increase more for the experimental than the control group. A pre- and post- word association task was given for eight concepts. As expected, there was a greater increase in the associations to these concepts for the students who wrote the dialogue journal focused on the regional novel than for those who wrote on topics of their own selection and didn't read the novel.

Secondly, at the level of rhetorical organization, there were significant

(cont. p. 12)

(TESOL, cont. from p. 11)

differences between the journals of the two groups. On the basis of features identified by Kinneavy (1971), the control group's entries were predominantly expressive prose. Such writing is characterized by a high frequency of first person pronouns, interjections ("Gee!", "Yeah!"), phrasal repetitions ("It's snowing, snowing, snowing....It's snowing.") and parallelism of syntactic units ("She is 75 years old...She's a nice lady....She's kind but lonely."). There are generally high levels of subjectivity with a focus on the writer.

The writing of the experimental group, on the other hand, was referential, with the main concern being the content of the novel. Factual statements were frequent and the tone was impersonal and objective, with both inductive and deductive reasoning being used to support the writer's argument (Kinneavy, 1971). When the first person pronoun was used, it was often to qualify the writer's statement ("I think that...").

By reading the teacher's comments in the journals, students were able to construct the meaning of a text that was more difficult than one they would be able to read alone. The increase of associations to key concepts in the Langer task suggests that schema building was also occurring through this collaborative process. An additional benefit was that the students spontaneously produced referential text. Besides improving their understanding of the culture and their reading skills, the focused dialogue journal provided practice in writing exactly the sort of prose they needed for their other courses.

Kinneavy, J.L. 1971. *A theory of discourse.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc.

Langer, J.A. 1984. Examining background knowledge and text comprehension. *Reading Research Quarterly* 19(4):468-481.

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Developing Metacognition and Effective Reading Strategies Through Reading Journals

Suzanne Salimbene described a dialogue journal activity designed to develop metacognitive ability, and through that, better reading strategies. Students were asked to document and analyze their daily reading practice and the reading strategies they learned in the course. Specifically, they documented in the journal everything they read each day and the time they required to complete each reading. They chose one of these readings and described in detail which of the strategies in their text, *Interactive Reading* (Salimbene), they had used in their reading; how they carried out the reading task; and whether or not the strategy had been helpful.

Students also used the journals as a forum to discuss their successes and failures with reading. They described experimentation and reading breakthroughs, and asked Salimbene for advice on adaptation of strategies according to text and purpose. Reading and discussion was not limited to English texts. Students read and described their experiences in reading in their native languages as well.

In another paper, "Metacognition, Perception, and Reading Fluency: Changing Students Reading Habits," Suzanne Salimbene and Ann Ediger used these journals, in addition to pre and post course questionnaires, to document changes in student metacognition, perception and fluency. An analysis of the journals indicated significant development in students' awareness and their ability to control and orchestrate reading strategies, a change in their expectations of reading success, and, in general, a more positive attitude toward reading.

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(cont. p. 13)

> "Many school traditions seem to have actually hindered language development. In our zeal to make it easy, we've made it hard. How? Primarily by breaking whole (natural) language up into bite-size, but abstract little pieces. It seemed so logical to think that little children could best learn simple little things. We took apart the language and turned it into words, syllables, and isolated sounds. Unfortunately, we also postponed its natural purpose--the communication of meaning--and turned it into a set of abstractions, unrelated to the needs and experiences of the children we sought to help."" --Ken Goodman (1986). *What's Whole in Whole Language.* Heinemann, p. 7.

(TESOL, cont. from p. 12)

An Analysis of Input, Interaction, and Communication in the Dialogue Journals of Deaf Community College Students

Beverly Cannon and Charlene Polio analyzed the dialogue journal writing of a hearing instructor and eleven deaf community college students.

First, they looked at the complexity of the instructor's sentence structure and found that he adapted his own writing to the proficiency level of each student. He also employed several communication devices to encourage his students to write more, and to help them write more clearly. In addition, he modified his input according to student interests, levels of motivation and learning styles.

They also analyzed interactive features of the students' writing. Most of these students initially lacked awareness of the communicative nature of the writing task. Over time, however, they began to respond more to the instructor as a person, and to ask more questions which were less focused on themselves.

Cannon and Polio concluded that dialogue journals allowed this instructor to individualize instruction on the basis of both academic and affective factors. They also helped the students learn more about written interaction.

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Dialogue Journals for Cross Cultural Communication

Teresa Dalle and Charles Hall reported on a writing project between international (ESL) students in an elementary public school and fourth grade American students in a private, Catholic school in Memphis, Tennessee. The children wrote to each other weekly over the course of a semester in what they termed "Pen Pal Journals." The presenters analyzed the journals for six specific features--clarification of lexical, cultural and syntactic items; errors, either native language or ESL; error correction, both direct and indirect; incorporation of new words and new constructions; cultural inquiries, both explicit and implicit; and cultural knowledge or sharing, both explicit and implicit. The advantages of the project were most evident in language (lexical and syntactic incorporation and acquisition), culture (inquiries and sharing), and writing as communication (an on-going discourse). Although there were some problems encountered in setting up the project, the advantages seemed to outweigh the problems. The children participated in a very positive writing experience which also turned out to be one of cultural sharing.

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Beginning at the Beginning: Interactive Writing with First Grade ESL Students

Joy Kreeft Peyton discussed her research concerning the effects of dialogue journal use on the writing development of first graders learning ESL. She looked at the use of dialogue journals in light of three questions:

Would dialogue journals work with this group of students, all of whom were at a stage of beginning literacy?

What resources would the children use to produce their early writing?

How would their writing develop over time?

One month after school began the children, who were all limited-English-proficient, and some of whom were non-literate in both their native language and in English, started to write and draw in their journals. The primary resource for their writing initially was words and phrases pasted around the room. Eventually they began to also use printed matter brought from home, such as words from shopping bags, and later began attempting to write wrods that they did not find in print, using invented spelling. No spelling was corrected by the teacher, but she attempted to incorporate words the students had used in her replies. Over time the children advanced from copied words, through invented spelling, to more standard spellings, and their sentence structure increased in complexity. Toward the end of the year, the students began to write longer pieces, such as lengthy descriptions of personal events and problems. Peyton attributed their progress to their exposure to an environment rich in printed and spoken word, and to the daily opportunity they had to write about subjects that interested them.

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CONVERSATIONAL ROLES: TO PERCEIVE OR MISPERCEIVE?

Martha R. Dolly
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All of us have probably sensed that some dialogue journal conversations are more satisfying than others, that some seem to "sink" while others "float." We usually have no reason to compare consciously the relative success of dialogue journal interactions, but our unconscious impressions might be influenced by and influence our judgments of students in other academic areas. Findings from my research suggest how important it is that teachers work out the features they believe are important for successful dialogue writing, specifying the dynamics of successful interaction so that they have a clearer picture of the quality of each conversation as it is in process and can promote rather than hinder students' participation.

The purpose of my dissertation was to "map" the conversational roles of dialogue journal partners--to identify features of the conversations that indicate reciprocity (shared responsibility) in advancing and repairing them and to determine the degree of reciprocity present. The subjects were adult ESL students, but I believe the findings apply to virtually any instructional setting.

My analysis showed that half of the journals were substantially more or less reciprocal than my initial impressionistic judgment had indicated. This happened because as I wrote, I was unclear about the criteria I considered important to a successful interaction and had allowed certain salient features of the interaction to unduly influence my assessment.

Had I been aware during the course of the conversations of the various ways that students might signal reciprocity, I might have perceived more accurately the success (or non-success) of their interactions and assisted in the interactions more effectively. For example, during the analysis I found that some students I had thought were not interacting effectively, were simply showing very little reciprocity in one area (e.g. answering questions) but a great deal in a less obvious but equally important area. If I had realized early on that some students were relying heavily on a single type of conversational strategy (e.g. responding to teacher comment), I might have been able to encourage them to experiment with a wider variety of strategies by modifying my own (e.g. asking fewer questions).

The following case illustrates how I misperceived a student's level of reciprocity in our dialogue journal because I wasn't taking appropriate features into account. "Yasuhiro" seemed, by virtue of his many questions, to be the most interactive partner, and I impressionistically ranked his journal as most reciprocal. However, my analysis revealed that he took less responsibility for extending conversations than did many other students. I was apparently misled by his prolific writing and enthusiasm for novel topics (e.g. decorating with chopsticks), criteria which were irrelevant to what I intended to measure, the *reciprocal* development of topics.

Perception of students as journal partners can also be distorted by expectations based on test scores and other outside factors. One student, "Hung Hwa," had very high scores on the Michigan Test, and I expected her to be a fairly interactive partner. However, my analysis showed that her role in shaping the conversation, though creative, was more limited than I'd thought.

By contrast, I did not expect "Rafid" to participate actively because of his poor academic record and while we wrote, I did not see him as particularly participative. My analysis showed that, though basically a passive partner, he took more responsibility for extending the conversation than I had anticipated or recognized in the course of the interaction. Had I perceived his major strength (reacting to my comments) earlier, I might have found a way to encourage him to use it more effectively or even to use a wider variety of strategies. As it was, I may have hindered his participation by not expecting much of the conversation. My perception of these two students' roles had been influenced more by my preconceptions than by what was actually occurring in the interaction itself.

Dialogue writing does not occur in a vacuum. It can affect the broader teacher-student relationship (perhaps even influencing grading) and can itself be affected by what happens in the classroom. Even a quick, informal analysis of the interaction (based on specific criteria so as to exclude irrelevant features) can help us appreciate what is actually going on in the conversation and perhaps can suggest ways we can encourage a student to assume greater responsibility for its success. At the very least, specifying criteria for what makes a successful interaction can give us a better sense of how partners vary in their approach to dialogue writing and of what keeps some conversations afloat while others seem to be constantly on the verge of going under. •

Martha R. Dolly, Frostburg State University
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DIALOGUE JOURNAL NETWORK

We're getting organized! Since so many people are doing new and interesting work with dialogue journals, it's time to make information about people with special expertise or similar interests available to everyone. Below are names, addresses, and phone numbers of those *we* know who are working with dialogue journals in teacher training; they are willing to be contacted by others about their work. If you would like to be added to this list (which we will henceforth share when someone writes or calls us for information) please let us know, and we'll add you on. Other areas will be listed in the next issue.

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NOTES FROM THE FIELD

Language development of a student learning English as a second language

Corine Stoepker, ESL teacher
Fairfax County, Virginia

[Extracted from a paper about a dialogue journal that Corine kept with a fourth grade student]

In the beginning I merely answered my questions, but later on she often had questions of her own to ask me. She began to introduce new topics. For example, she wrote me that she had learned the "Drummer Boy" song and would be singing it on the stage at school.

today I learn a dram boy sing. but I cant sing wiht out looking at the paper. we are goning to sing in the stage. Last year I did that too. I had lot of fun. did you did theos thing too? Now I have things to ask you. I'm glad to have many things to write.

Here she expressed a real interest in what I did as a child, and her pleasure that she had interesting things to write about and could ask me a question, just as I often asked her questions.

Although her spelling, capitalization and syntax were still faulty, her thoughts and words were very fluid and conversational. I wish I could say there was a great improvement because of my "modeling" of the language, but during the short time we corresponded the only element I can be fairly sure she copied from my writing was my use of the exclamation mark. (Our correspondence was an enthusiastic one!)

We developed a friendly, honest relationship. Once, when she couldn't understand something I'd written in cursive she refused to let another teacher help her with it--it was *our private journal*. Instead, she solved her problem by requesting (in the journal) that I *print* all my entries from that time on, and I complied. •

(Network, continued)

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NEXT ISSUES

- **INTERACTIVE WRITING IN DEAF EDUCATION** (Winter 1987)
  This issue will survey the use of interactive writing for deaf students, in dialogue journals and in other configurations (such as local area computer networks).

  LOTS of Notes from the Field will make this a great issue and even more useful. PLEASE WRITE!

- **DIALOGUE JOURNALS IN INTERNATIONAL SETTINGS**
  A spotlight on dialogue journal use in countries around the world.

  - Language learning
  - Mother tongue adult education
  - Third World language issues

  This will be our spring issue if we can get enough information by March 1987.

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DIALOGUE is the newsletter about the uses, benefits, and theory of dialogue journals, a practice of communicating in writing about topics of mutual interest through continuous, functional conversations between (usually) learners and teachers. This newsletter provides an informal means of sharing information, ideas and concerns among those who are using dialogue journals and studying their uses in the United States and in other countries. It is an outgrowth of two National Institute of Education research grants to study dialogue journal writing with native and non-native English speakers. The newsletter is now produced with partial support from the Center for Language Education and Research (CLEAR), which is funded by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement of the Department of Education. For information about dialogue journal research and practical applications or the work of CLEAR, write: Dialogue, CLEAR, Center for Applied Linguistics, 1118 22nd St., N.W., Washington, DC 20037.

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Happy New Year

Dialogue

Bonne Année

Prospero año nuevo

Eine Gutes Neues Jahr

INTERACTIVE WRITING IN DEAF EDUCATION

Similar to the widespread use of dialogue journals with hearing students learning a second language, interactive writing is taking hold as a viable practice in deaf education, as illustrated by the range of articles in this issue, representing both elementary and university education and institutions from the east to the west coast of the United States. Dialogue journals are well represented here, but articles also describe interactive writing on local-area and distance computer networks. This enthusiasm is not surprising. For most deaf students, English is a second language. It is also a language which they must learn to write without having the opportunity to first learn its uses in direct communication, in speech.

This lack of access to spoken English results in considerable difficulties with reading and writing. Much of our *feel* for written English--its structures, vocabulary, nuances, and manners of expression--comes from speaking it. Many aspects of English that most children have internalized by the time they begin school may not be learned by deaf students even by the time they graduate from high school. Additionally, deaf students often feel frustrated with the need to read and write in English, since it is not the language they usually use to accomplish things that are important to them. The following observations about difficulties with English come from the dialogue journals of two deaf college students.

When I began to go to a deaf school, I learned another language, English as my second language. I found out that learning English is more difficult than ASL, so I have continually practiced how to write English in proper way for a long time. For many years, I always have hard times to understand the rules of writing and I never comprehend English for one hundred percent... Therefore, English is one of my hateful and uninteresting subjects that I ever have since I was young. I still remember the old times that a few English teachers of mine were angry at me not to understand these rules of writing. I became frustrated and tried to learn and memorize these rules.... I was absolutely bitter when I was forced to write any essay.... Presently I don't still like English, but I have to get used to it because I can't live without knowing English. English is America's main language that we use.

****

In my freshman year at high school, I was forced to read 6th grade books which were my suitable level of reading and I have always hated to read books. I could understand words for words but I could never understand the concept of sentences which had no meaning to me. It is still a problem to me and usually I don't read books which I should. But I want to continue my education especially in English which is my weakest area. I do not want to look dumb or illiterate to other people who do not know deaf's problems. I want to look equal to others.

Interactive writing with a native or more proficient English speaker, of the sort that these and other students throughout this issue are engaged in, appears to be a very effective way to approach reading and writing with deaf children and adults. In fact, the success experienced to date of interactive writing approaches with young deaf students indicates that written language can be readily and eagerly learned with a fair degree of mastery, when used in functional, communicative contexts. For example, 6- and 7-year-old deaf children at Kendall Demonstration Elementary School began with ease using dialogue journals and conducting online computer conversations in English. Some deaf students seem to move directly from sign language into written language, skipping a presumed "necessary" intermediate step: the knowledge of spoken English.

(continued on p. 2)

(continued from p. 1)

One positive consequence for the hearing world of such work with deaf students is to challenge two common assumptions: (1) that reading and writing are so inherently difficult that only years of instruction can make their acquisition possible, and (2) that lack of prior spoken language competence forever handicaps the person learning to read and write. If profoundly deaf students can move readily into reading and writing when given opportunities to accomplish them in interaction, then students with normal hearing and speech should have no greater difficulty in becoming functional users of written language. If they do, then we need to look at the specific tasks we give them as a possible cause of their failure before we attribute it to their inherent inability, their lack of English knowledge, or the "difficulty" of reading and writing.

Our work with deaf students indicates that the presumed difficulty of writing is not inherent, but is due to specific uses of written language which are most decontextualized and therefore require the most experience and training for mastery. What the work with deaf students points toward is a much-needed breakdown of an overall concept of "writing" into its specific manifestations. Some kinds of written text, particularly extended expository prose, are very difficult for children and adults to master, precisely because they are least like the interactional, dialogic uses of language at which we are most expert. When writing and reading occur in interactional contexts with the support of a more experienced user of the language, they turn out to be readily acquired human abilities, because they allow the learner to draw on the same inherent programming for communication that speech and sign language draw on.

A logical result of this change in perception about writing would be for us as educators and curriculum designers to rethink what are the most opportune and appropriate types of writing with which to begin to develop writing ability. Instead of beginning with extended, decontextualized prose, which can cause problems for all of us, why not begin with direct participation in dialogic conversations? §

The Dialogue Journal: Reconceiving Curriculum and Teaching

Bonnie Meath-Lang
National Technical Institute for the Deaf

The dialogue journal, in its various forms and uses, has been discussed in fields such as counseling, nursing education, theology, teacher education, social work, ESL, and, as can be seen in this issue of *Dialogue*, deaf education. A related area where the dialogue journal has had a profound methodological impact is the discipline of curriculum theory. Journal use has had a particularly successful marriage with the movement known as *reconceptualist* curriculum (Pinar, 1975; Molnar & Zahorik, 1977). Reconceived curriculum begins with the individual and his or her world, and is thus rooted in autobiography, social, political and cultural concern, and authentic dialogue. Such curriculum requires that the lives and stories of teachers and students be examined through extensive writing and discussion. These stories, writings, and discussions progressively reform and inform the educational practices, content, and classroom life of the participants. The dialogue journal provides a medium for the voices of teachers and students to enact this type of collaborative curriculum--in fact, the dialogue journal itself becomes, in many ways, the curriculum.

In a writing course at the National Technical Institute for the Deaf, Ms. Mary Denise Patin wrote the following entry, which illustrates how she had begun to take control of her learning.

I do realize now that my writing is not too bad after all. Infact, I have finally read all the chapters over the weekend and realized more what a good writing is all about - by telling the truths and facts, and I do this in journal writing. It seems to be easier to do it when writing to a person....Like you've said in class, students have their own control in writing when they choose their own topics....I need to be criticized by others how they thought or felt about me, my writings....Group discussions is another thing for me to learn through too...

Ms. Patin, a prelingually, profoundly deaf college student, had developed--through reading, reflection, and dialogue journal writing--her *own* rationale for pursuing a course of learning. She had taken control of her education through written self-assessment. We see in her piece a reworking of her own assumptions about writing *(cont. p. 3)*

(cont. from p. 2) and study and a re-evaluation of her skills, with a future goal as well as a present touchstone for the constitution of good writing ("telling the truth and facts"). She has also discovered what makes writing easier for her ("writing to a person")--and has validated linguistic theory on dialogue writing in doing so! (Kreeft, Shuy, Staton, Reed, & Morroy, 1984). More to the point, Ms. Patin has demonstrated the capability of students to be involved in critical areas of curriculum development: the construction of a rationale for learning, goal-setting, assessment, and evaluation. She has done so, moreover, critically, openly, and analytically, referring to her reading and to the opinion of experts.

Reconceived curriculum theory has, at its heart, a position that the life of schools, of classrooms must be continually examined. Assumptions must be defined and challenged in order to nurture thinking students and thinking teachers. The use of dialogue journals is conducive to this sort of ongoing evaluation on the part of both groups (Albertini & Meath-Lang, 1986). As the excerpt from Ms. Patin's journal demonstrates, students become collaborators with teachers in this process. ∞

Albertini, J., & Meath-Lang, B. (1986). An analysis of student-teacher exchanges in dialogue journal writing. *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing*, 7(1), 153-201.

Kreeft, J., Shuy, R. W., Staton, J., Reed, L., & Morroy, R. (1984). *Dialogue writing: Analysis of student-teacher interactive writing in the learning of English as a second language*. Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics.

Molnar, A., & Zahorik, J. (Eds.). (1977). *Curriculum theory*. Washington, DC: ASCD.

Pinar, W. (1975). *Curriculum theorizing: The reconceptualists*. Berkeley: McCutchan.

A longer version of this article will appear in Perspectives on Journal Writing, *Donna Jurich & Joy Kreeft Peyton, Eds. To be published by TESOL.* §

Interactive Teaching of Reading

Margaret Walworth
Gallaudet University

The mental work involved in reading occurs entirely within the head of the reader. Content-focused dialogue journals, where students and their teacher carry on a written conversation about what is read, provide valuable information about what each student is doing and how he or she can be guided to more effective reading techniques.

I use dialogue journals with my freshman-level students at Gallaudet University to discuss books read for class. The majority of these students were either born with a significant hearing loss or lost their hearing before the age of three, thereby interfering with natural acquisition of English. For these students, dialogue journals have the added advantage of providing flow of conversation carried on entirely in the target language.

Class size ranges from 10 to 14 students. We meet three times a week. Four or five books are read during the semester and each of these books is discussed in the journals. Students seem to really enjoy this approach, and participate actively in the journal exchanges. Carrying on a written conversation with the teacher about impressions, questions or confusions about what is being read gives the students an opportunity to articulate their thinking processes and receive feedback from the teacher.

Engaging in a written dialogue with the teacher about course content can make it seem more real to the student. All too often students write about a book they are reading in a "test-taking" manner, requiring "right answers." In the journal dialogue, however, the teacher and student can together determine what types of approaches the student is taking to the text and then work together toward more appropriate approaches, if necessary.

To illustrate the mediation that can occur in the dialogue journal interaction, I will share how this occurred with one of my students when we were reading Russell Baker's *Growing Up*, Janet Lewis' *The Wife of Martin Guerre*, and William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* for English class. This student, whose diagnostic reading test scores were the lowest in the class, started the semester by informing me that he was a "lousy reader." Our first book, *Growing Up*, did not seem to present too much difficulty for *(cont. p. 4)* *(cont. from p. 3)* him, and in his journal he compared events in the book with the way he thought they should be.

Larry: Lucy contacted on Russell too much. Russell seemed that he was spoiled. She gave him a suit and a bike. What about Doris and Audrey? ...Lucy had treated Russell very well. Furthermore, she should treat Doris well too....

Writing about the book in the journal seemed to help him to recount what he had read and to discuss it. When we moved to a harder book, *The Wife of Martin Guerre*, he experienced more difficulty. He wrote:

Larry: This part is really confused. I will reread this part tonight to get the right answer. Furthermore I better read careful about the course.

Ms. Walworth: I'm not sure what you mean; "I had better read careful about the course." I would really like to know if there is something you are confused about or would like to discuss with me.

Larry: As I said that I had better read careful about the course because I didn't completely understand the story.

In addition to expressing confusion, he had changed his approach here. A "test-taking" approach replaced his previous efforts to apply his own standards to what he had read. Now, he was only talking about finding the "right answers."

When we started the next book, *Lord of the Flies*, Larry again started out with a sense of confusion, but this time was able to articulate its source: he discussed how he felt the *author* was making things difficult for him and how he needed to cope with this difficulty, instead of focusing on his "lousy reading" and his need for "right answers." In my reply I tried to help him see how to make inferences based on what he read.

Larry: The story "Lord of the Flies" is not completed written because when one thing happens it doesn't really tells us what is happening exactly such as: the little boy is missing. But your answer is the little boy is burnt by the fire. Furthermore, when Jack bends down to the ground as a hunter. For answer, I have to use my mind to figure out what will happen like Jack was listening for the animals.

Ms. Walworth: You are right--with this book you have to read more carefully and think hard to understand what the writer means. For example, on p. 43, Piggy asks "Where is that little 'un with the birthmark?" Then Piggy says, "He was down there" (meaning down where the fire was). We can guess that means that the "little 'un" got burnt up. In the same way, in the third chapter, when Jack is smelling the ground, we can GUESS that he is trying to smell pigs, since we KNOW he and his choir boys are supposed to be hunting for food. Reading successfully is putting facts together for yourself--it's good exercise for the mind!

As he got farther into the book, Larry began more and more to integrate what he was reading with his own experience.

Larry: I feel sorry that Ralph did a hard work. He went the mountain first and he had to accept to go to the mountain with Jack so Jack won't think Ralph is sissy. But he did a lot of work than everyone else.

If I was there, I would find better way to handle duties. I think everyone would have duties, so Ralph won't do all the work or less arguments. Unfortunately, the boys are always curious about things had happened.

Although his reading of *Lord of the Flies* was still not on a very high level, he was at least finding personal meaning in it. Writing about the story in a dialogue journal had helped him get beyond some of the more obvious difficulties with which the text presented him.

Interactive theories of reading instruction open up new vistas for research on reading successes and failures, and for improved classroom practice. Content-focused dialogue journals fit very well with these theories: dialogue journals focus squarely on the learner. Learning proceeds in steps beginning from where the learner happens to be, rather than from some preconceived model coming from the outside. Learning occurs through negotiations with the teacher on the meaning (and meanings) contained in the text. ∞

A longer version of this article will appear in Perspectives on Journal Writing, *Donna Jurich & Joy Kreeft Peyton, Eds., to be published by TESOL.* §

Computer Networks: A Collaborative Approach to Literacy Development

Joy Kreeft Peyton
Center for Applied Linguistics

JoAnn Mackinson-Smyth
Kendall Demonstration Elementary School

Megan: Hello Helen, are you ready?
Helen: yes
Megan: Good, I got alots of presents.
Helen: What dose?
Megan: Please repeat, I dont understand what you mean.
Helen: oh "what you did dose"?
Megan: What dose?
Helen: I mean what you did got christmas?
Megan: Oh okay, I got clothes, shoes, and some toys!! And some cabbage patch dolls too.
Helen: i got clothes, puppy pound, fluppy dog, and etc.
Megan: I got six newborn pound puppies for christmas too.
Helen: i don't know true or false about pound puppies?
Megan: Oh, thats part of toys.
Helen: false
Megan: Yes, right, you know all toys are false....My real cat was very bad during the vacation.
Helen: what your did cat do?
Megan: OOHh terrible thing, she toilet on moms favorite sofa, he mess my moms favorite plant, destroyed my moms old sofa as her stachting post, put her claws on washing machine, dryer things at unitily room. VVEERRYY BBAADD CCAATT !!!!...

At Kendall Demonstration Elementary School in Washington, DC five conversations like this one are taking place at once, but the only sound in the room is the clicking of computer keys and an occasional chuckle. These students are hearing impaired, and are communicating on a local area network that allows real-time written interaction. The students sit at a terminal and type what they want to say into a private area at the bottom of the screen. When they press a key, the message is immediately transmitted to the other student's screen, tagged with the name of the sender. The screen scrolls to make room for new messages, approximating an oral conversation. The entire discussion can be printed out at the end.

These students have been using the network once a week for the past two years, writing in pairs with each other or with their teacher. A year after they began, when they were 9 years old, they were joined by students in another class, who were younger (7-8 years old) and less proficient in English, thus providing opportunities for a peer tutoring relationship in which the older, more experienced students could work with the younger ones.

These children's network interactions give them a unique opportunity to collaborate in their learning of written English, in a genuinely communicative context. Reading and writing grow out of their own interests and experiences and their primary purpose for writing is to send meaningful, understandable messages. As they attempt to express their thoughts to another person in writing, they are pushed to attempt structures they have not yet mastered. The writing of the other person provides models of structures, vocabulary, and manners of expression on which they can build their own writing. One way that this collaboration occurs is in simply *conducting a conversation*. The following interaction, for example, took place between "Robin," one of the older students, and "Pam," one of the younger ones. Pam was just beginning to use the network and had only beginning proficiency in English at the time.

Robin: ...do you have any pets?
Pam: yes i have my pet is fish.
Robin: oh i see i have a pet too i have a dog.
Pam: oh you have baby dog?
Robin: no before that dog was baby baby dogs are called puppies. My dog is girl. She is 4 years old.
Pam: oh
Robin: Do you want to know what's her name?
Pam: yes i want your name.
Robin: Okay, Her name is Tina. Do you like cats?
Pam: who is's cats.
Robin: No I dont have cats I want to know if you like cats?
Pam: oh i like cats yes
Robin: Do you like kittens? Kittens are baby cats.... I cant have kittens or cats. They make my dad have cold.
Pam: i not understand.
Robin: My dad-is allergy to cats. Allergy mean that people cant use or touch.

If i drink milk i become sick. Do you understand?

Pam: your father home? robin and dog doing out or in.

Robin: no, my dog doing in. do you like bear?
afraid.
bite.

Pam: no i afraid bear because will be bite....

Robin does a number of things to facilitate Pam's participation. She asks her questions so she'll have something to write about and to check on Pam's comprehension of what she has written. She introduces new vocabulary that Pam then uses in her turns, moving from general to more specific terms--from pets to dogs to puppies and from cats to kittens. She explains new words (puppies, kittens, allergy) as she introduces them. When Pam wants to use a word that she doesn't know how to write, she stands up and asks Robin in sign language how to spell it; Robin provides the word in writing ("afraid," "bite"). With Robin's help, Pam is even able to produce a relatively complex statement, "no I afraid bear because will be bite" (No, I am afraid of bears because they bite).

The children also collaborate in *playing language games and writing stories*. Here, three students are writing a story about an encounter with a vampire.

Marcie: hello, let start our topic is "coming into my night mare"
Once upon a time there was a boy named Tom he went to sleep he had nightmare

Anna: what mare mean is?

Robin: it means a bad dream.

Anna: oh i see. his mare is about an vamprie. a vamprie want to eat he. he not want the vamprie to eat he.

Robin: he ran into a house that is haunted and was in. The door slammed.

Marcie: he started to be afraid he had alot of imagion that mean he think what shall hapeen then he thought he was at the movies with alot of doors that slammed. There is another mean to mare is a female horse night mare mean bad dreams

Anna: but he saw many vamprie. then he thought it is a false vampries. but it is real vampries!!!!!!!

Robin: he ran and ran and fainted

Marcie: then he woke up with blood on neck and say "ohhhhhvvaammppiirree hhaadd bitt me"...

This story continues for quite a while, with new characters and episodes being introduced.

Finally, they collaborate in *reviewing and critiquing transcripts* of their network conversations. After the conversations, a transcript from one of them is retyped in large print (for easy reading). Students take it home to correct, and then discuss together (in sign language) various aspects of the conversation--content, interaction patterns, manners of written expression, and language form. They identify topics discussed on the network and determine whether the speakers stayed on a topic or strayed from it, and whether there were smooth topic transitions. They discuss how the speakers began, ended, and maintained their conversations, whether a particular question or response was clear, and how various responses might be improved.

During the past two years we have seen some very positive developments in these children's writing. Without teacher prompting, they have initiated creative new ways to write on the network, exploring new topics, language games, and story writing. Some of the students who had little English proficiency in the beginning have shown some remarkable changes. For example, when Pam began writing on the network, she could do very little without assistance. A teacher sat next to her to help her read what was written and type her message. The conversation below is one of her early ones.

Marcie: hello everybody

Pam: hi

Marcie: hello pam marcie here how are you?

Pam: i ma fine

Marcie: i am fine too

Pam: i ma go vilneae mother and father

Marcie: you will do what with mom and dad

Pam: yes me will go mom and dad...

Her contributions were short, she did not maintain a topic for long, and much of her writing was incomprehensible. In the conversation with Robin (shown on p. 5), written five months later, she is reading and writing on the network with very little teacher help, and her level of English proficiency has developed considerably.

(continued on p. 7)

(continued from p. 6)

In their discussions of the transcripts, the children have shown an increased sense of ownership of their writing and an improved ability to analyze it. They have come to consider themselves as experts about the language of the networked discussions, since they are the ones who produced it.

Many scholars studying learning processes now argue that some of the best learning occurs through collaboration with other learners. On a local area network, in which students work together to create meaning in writing, various kinds of collaboration are made possible. ∞

This article is adapted from "Writing and talking about writing: Computer networking with elementary students". To appear in Richness in writing: Empowering minority students. *Duane H. Roen & Donna M. Johnson, Editors, Longman Publishers.* §

NEXT ISSUES

DIALOGUE JOURNALS IN INTERNATIONAL SETTINGS (SPRING, 1988)

A spotlight on dialogue journal use in countries around the world.

- In Germany, Japan, and China
- In refugee camps in Southeast Asia
- In learning how to read and write Chinantec, an Indian language in Mexico
- and more!!!!

DIALOGUE JOURNALS IN TEACHER TRAINING (Fall, 1988)

A growing number of people are using dialogue journals in pre-service and in-service teacher training. Teachers and teachers-to-be have the rare opportunity to take time and reflect on what they are reading and what they are learning about the classroom, their students and themselves, with someone who has had different experiences with teaching and can provide a new perspective. Teachers who have used dialogue journals are especially ready to begin a dialogue with their students when they finish their training. A lot of you have wonderful stories to tell. Let us hear from you. §

The Development of the Syntactic Representation of Meaning in the Writing of Young Deaf Students

Jana Staton

The acquisition of English as an oral language by a young child is marked by the growth of syntactic representation of meaning *within* the utterance. In the first stage of meaning-making, meaning is constructed interactionally by the child and an adult. The child points or makes some sound or sign, referring to an object or event, and the adult supplies the linguistic forms, as in the following example (from Snow & Goldfield, 1982).

(1) child: cookie
Mother: Here's a cookie. MMM good cookie

In such utterances, semantic relationships are derivable only from context and world knowledge; they are not made explicit in the utterance. The adult speaker provides the language, responding to a word, gesture, or facial expression to create the utterance which approximates the child's meaning. At this stage, the child's representation of meaning is *interactionally dependent* on the linguistic context supplied by the other speaker.

At the second stage, the child utters two or more words, juxtaposing them to form an utterance which is more comprehensible.

(2) child: mommy cookie

However, the contextual situation is still required to make sure what the child means. "Mommy cookie" could mean "mommy, give me a cookie." This stage of intraspeaker *juxtaposition* often demonstrates that the child has the underlying meaning of the utterance, but does not yet know how to represent it syntactically.

In the third stage, which in oral language acquisition is reached when the child is about three or four years old, the child provides a fairly complete syntactic representation of her thought, as in the following examples.

(3) child: Give me cookie, Mommy
(4) child: I wants sweater.

While they may not always be entirely correct according to rules of standard English, these third-stage utterances demonstrate a firm grasp of the *(cont. p. 8)*

(cont. from p. 7) syntactical forms representing meaning. The test of ***syntactic representation*** is whether a hearer would need to know the context in which the utterance was made in order to be sure of its meaning.

Dialogue journals can provide young deaf children with opportunities to engage in functional dialogues with competent users of English. Given the parallels between the written dialogues and oral language interactions, a reasonable question to ask is whether the written utterances of young deaf children show evidence of the same kind of natural development of syntactical representation. If a similar pattern in the dialogue journal texts is found, this could be evidence that the dialogue is providing a strong language environment for learning English as a second language, similar to that provided by parents in first language acquisition.

For this analysis, I selected a dialogue journal from Nancy, a 6-year old deaf student with a profound hearing loss, born of hearing parents. Her school environment involved an emphasis on signing, and her teacher used ASL in class. At the start of the year, she was only minimally proficient in basic reading and writing tasks. She and the teacher wrote to each other on a regular basis during the 1983-84 school year, averaging four days a week.

In this analysis, as in other language acquisition studies, an "utterance" is any statement or assertion made by the child which in context appears to be complete, even though utterances may vary in their degree of syntactic completeness and thus independence. To account for all of Nancy's writing, "drawing" was added to the three categories suggested by Snow and Goldfield for children's speech, and counted as an utterance when it conveyed information to the teacher and elicited a response.

Each of the following is a complete utterance (in the sense of "idea units") in Nancy's writing.

/red and blue Searls/
/(drawing of a girl in a dress)/
/feel/
/The brothers is died/

Two samples of utterances were drawn from Nancy's journal from the beginning and toward the end of the school year. Each utterance was coded in terms of how meaning was accomplished.

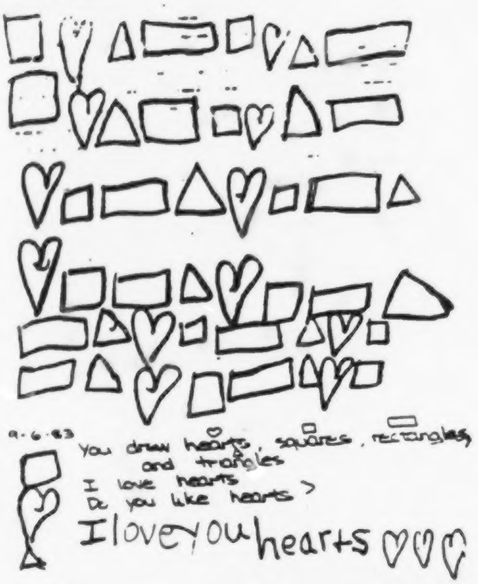
Drawing - meaning is accomplished by drawing alone, without words, to introduce a topic or answer a teacher question

Interactionally Dependent - meaning is accomplished by one or more words, in response to a teacher question

Juxtaposition - meaning is accomplished by two or more words without syntactic connection (i.e., verb, possessive case, are missing)

Syntactic - meaning is represented syntactically

An example of Nancy's early entries is shown below.



9-6-83
You draw hearts, squares, rectangles and triangles
I love hearts
Do you like hearts?
I love you hearts

In coding the utterances for the degree of syntactic representation, the criterion used was that of English syntax. In some cases, the student may have written a sentence that would be an appropriate statement in ASL. Thus, this analysis makes no claim that the deaf child of six or seven is lacking in some underlying competence in understanding relationships. It was assumed that the deaf child has the necessary underlying cognitive-linguistic competence but does not yet have the knowledge of how to represent that competence in written English. What we are observing in the dialogue journals is a language learner moving from underlying competence in human communication to the surface representation of meaning in a second language, through the appropriate syntactical features required in English.

If we look at the proportion of utterances which fall into each of four *(cont. p. 9)*

(cont. from p. 8) categories, they give a very graphic picture of language acquisition. In the fall, the teacher's entries are often essential for an outside reader to understand Nancy's meaning -- 33% of her utterances are drawings, 7% are words which are meaningful only in an interactive- dependent context; and 48% are utterances in which the meaning is accomplished by apposition, or juxtaposition. In contrast, in the spring meaning is accomplished by syntactic representation in fully 70% of Nancy's utterances.

Table 1 - Growth of Syntactic Representation in a Primary Student's Dialogue Journal

	UTTERANCES	
	Fall	Spring
(N)	29	28
Drawing	9 (33%)	0
Interactive	2 (7%)	5 (18%)
Juxtaposition	14 (48%)	3 (11%)
Syntactic Representation (Eng.)	3 (10%)	20 (70%)

This growth from fall to spring is evidence of the child's real mastery of English syntax. At the same time, she showed significant progress in acquiring the correct forms of many grammatical morphemes. What is interesting about the fall to spring changes is that while the proportion of utterances in which meaning is accomplished interactionally stays about the same, by spring, the student has stopped relying on drawings as a way to make her meaning clear, and has very few utterances (11%) in which the words are just juxtaposed without syntactic connection.

In summary, a student who began the school year with only minimal proficiency in written syntactic representation, by spring was comfortable writing in complete sentences, with English word order and the relationships made clear in the syntax of the utterances themselves, without reliance on context.

Snow, C. E. & Goldfield, B. A. (1982). Building stories: The emergence of information structures from conversation. In D. Tannen (Ed.), *Georgetown University Roundtable on Languages and Linguistics* . Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.

This article is excerpted from Studies of Dialogue Journal Use with Deaf Primary Students, Report of the Dialogue Research Project, *Jana Staton, Washington, DC: Gallaudet Research Institute, 1984.* §

"Hi, how are you?": Electronic Mail to Promote the Literacy Development of Deaf Students

Frances A. Davis, Princeton Research Forum

Ninety deaf high school students, some with other handicapping conditions as well, recently completed the second year of a three-year New York University project in interactive literacy. Funded by the U.S. Office of Education and supported by Telenet Technical and International Communications, Ltd., the project enabled these students, scattered throughout the Northeast U.S., to use computer terminals to write and read letters and edit documents for a Schools Bulletin Board.

Analysis of students' writings at the end of the first year of the project indicated differences in mean T-unit length between letters written by one student to her peers and those she wrote to an adult, with longer T-units resulting when she wrote to an adult. These results, which substantiated the theoretical position that writing to different audiences affects the quality of text, encouraged the project staff to plan for more systematic adult-student writing. It was hypothesized that ongoing correspondence with a mature writer might be motivating and provide models which could promote student progress in writing, and a staff member was assigned in the second year to write letters with students who otherwise did not receive much mail and who, on the whole, were less able to express their thoughts in writing. The letters were often short, but the correspondence was ongoing. The students shared their lives with the staff member, gave her suggestions or help with problems, and sought help with their own problems.

A comparison of the writing at the end of the second year of the project indicates that writing more frequently and writing over time to a mature writer promote more complex writing, as measured by mean number of words per T-unit. The students who wrote letters frequently throughout the two years wrote longer T-units than those who wrote infrequently. In both groups, high- and low-frequency writers, writing over time with the same mature writer resulted in longer T-units, as shown in Table 1.

(continued on p. 10)

(continued from p. 9)

Table 1. Mean T-unit Length of Student Writing to Mature Writers and to Peers

Frequency of Writing	3 or More Letters to 1 Mature Writer	Letters Only to Peers or Fewer than 3 Letters to 1 Mature Writer
High Frequency	10.17	8.85
Low Frequency	8.00	7.00

An excerpt from the written interaction between one student and the staff member illustrates the development in the student's writing over time.

November
Hi Xxxx. I am fine. To answer your questions, NO, I do not have home box HBO or a VCR, but I am getting a VCR hopefully soon. How old are your children? I would like a boyfriend who buys me diamonds, gold and fur, but I would not want a boyfriend right now. But I would like one when I get older. Bye for now, Xxxx.

February
Dear Xxxx. How are you? I am fine.

Our school was not closed Thursday and Friday, but it was closed on Monday. I did not come in for a week and a half because of the snow.

I got a pair of earrings and a chain and bracelets for Christmas. I love jewlery and like them very much. They are gold. I don't like plastic or silver. I only like gold and diamonds. I can't afford diamonds, but I still like them a lot.

Tweety and Eety are fine. They are fun, but we don't let them out of the cage because my little sister is ascared of them. Yes, I think you should get another bird to keep it company. What is your bird's name? I am sorry I forgot you said its name was Rainbow. That is a nice name.

I might be going to camp for three weeks of July, but it is not definite yet. I hope that I could really go. That camp your son went to sounds nice. How many weeks did he go for? Bye for now, take care, write back. Xxxx.
(Spelling has been corrected and punctuation added for ease of reading.)

The writing at both times reflects many characteristics of oral interaction. Openings and closings are informal, questions are asked and answered, and the student assumes, as we do in talk, that reference to previous topics will be understood. By February, however, she elaborates considerably more about the topics mentioned and opens the door to further elaboration by asking a question about the same topic.

Our findings, both in terms of mean length of T-unit and development of writing over time, suggest that writing with a mature adult, who extends the students' writing and provides models of written self-expression, holds promise for developing the literacy skills of these students. §

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Dialogue Journal Discussion

"I thought I would become hearing when I grew older."

The dialogue journal may be the only place that individual students have to discuss with the teacher issues that are important to them, but outside of the scope of the class or the interests and experiences of other students. Here, a deaf student and a hearing professor at Gallaudet University discuss a matter that affects both of them--their relationship to the deaf community.

Student: I wonder how you like to teach at Gallaudet. How was or is your experience toward deafness? Do you occasionally feel out of place because of the barrier between the deaf and hearing? How do the deaf usually act toward you as a teacher...? Usually hearing people don't like to talk about their feeling toward the deaf and it seemed like they were hiding their feeling. If they ever expressed their feeling, I would learn more about them.

Teacher: My background is Jewish and my wife is also Jewish. We both identify strongly with the Jewish community. Many years ago, I began to see a similarity between what it means to be deaf and what it's like to be Jewish, and other minority groups like the Blacks. I believe that the deaf community, just like the Jewish community, is an ethnic group.

Although I feel a strong affinity *(cont.)*

(cont. from p. 10) to deaf people and the deaf community, I do not identify as a deaf person. Since I am not deaf, I have absolutely no desire to do so. It would be silly to try, and deaf people would not accept it.

Student: You mentioned that you do not consider yourself to identify as a deaf person and you do not have the desire to do so. This statement really hit me hard. I have known a few hearing friends who "identify" as deaf people and I could not tell if they were hearing or deaf. They forced themselves to be involved with the deaf (because they have the desire to do it) and they learned how to act "deaf." They must have the talent to do it while other or most people don't have.

I wonder if you ever feel losing motivation or interest in the deaf from time to time? I can understand that as you don't have the desire to be a "deaf" person.

Teacher: For me, trying to be "deaf" is similar to trying to be black, or anything else which you are not. We all know hearing people who would like to be accepted as "deaf." And why should they be accepted as deaf, if they are hearing? ...That does not mean that there cannot be friendship between deaf and hearing people. I have very good deaf friends, but without having any desire to be deaf myself.... I have had an intellectual and emotional interest in deaf people for a long time. My job is a real challenge and it keeps me motivated. But whatever I do, I don't think I'll lose interest in deaf people.

Student: What you were saying now makes sense to me. I never realized it that much before until you told me. I remember it very clearly that I was told I would never become hearing. I grew up deaf and I thought I would become hearing when I grew older because I almost never met any older deaf adults. ...My mom and teacher at school both told me that I will never become hearing. That really struck me hard and then I realized they were correct.

Now I don't have any hope or desire to become hearing since I accept myself.

§§§§§§§§§§§§§§§§§§§§§§§§§§§§§§§§§§§

Input and Interaction in the Dialogue Journals of Deaf Community College Students

Beverly Cannon and Charlene Polio
University of California, Los Angeles

This study explores the use of dialogue journals with deaf adults in an inner city community college in California, focusing on features of the instructor's writing to students at varying levels of English proficiency and on the communicative nature of the students' writing.

Despite tremendously varying academic levels, interests, and degrees of English proficiency, the hearing impaired students at this college are generally placed together in "remedial" English classes. Some of them are doing fairly well academically. Others are functionally illiterate. In fact, some have had little usable language of any kind until late in life. For the most part, these students have been school "failures." A third group are foreign deaf students who came to the United States after the completion of their secondary education, then began learning English in late adolescence or adulthood.

We studied the dialogue journals of one class of 11 students for one semester. The following excerpts from two journals illustrate the extreme differences in writing abilities among the students.

Student #1: *I work as a computer program. I write some programs for inventory system, purchase order system, physical inventory system, and tool system. I am deaf only at work. No deaf one is here. My two employees are Chinese. They sometimes write Chinese and English. I sometimes teach them sign language. They enjoy to learn sign language....*

Student #2: *...I went were not pay Due Bill about mail heavy Big money Back to clearly Better not want to jury But not pay postpone Due not fun to paid keep cool not joB hard in cities order try new talk go amtrck maybe joB hope try again*

For purposes of comparison, we also looked at one journal the instructor wrote with a hearing American student who worked in his office. The instructor is hearing, a native speaker of English and a fluent ASL signer.

First we looked at the instructor's writing to each student in terms of its complexity and the number of questions asked. A number of researchers have studied modifications made by native speakers when talking *(cont. p. 12)*

(cont. from p. 11) to nonnative speakers of a language. We found that this instructor made similar kinds of modifications in his writing, the degree of modifications for any given student depending largely on how proficient he perceived that student to be.

We asked the instructor to rank his students according to their comprehension of written text. We then looked at the complexity of his sentences (measured by mean number of words and mean number of clauses per T-unit) and found that in general he modified the complexity of his written input according to his perception of the student's ability to comprehend the writing, using more complex sentences when writing to students he ranked higher and less complex sentences with those he expected to understand less. In later discussions, he told us that he had not been aware of the extent to which he had made those modifications. It appears that he intuitively individualized his input to each student, rather than making a conscious effort to do so.

Researchers have noted that native English speakers ask more questions, and that more of them are of the *yes/no* variety, when talking to nonnative speakers than with other native speakers. This pattern appeared in our study as well. The instructor used more questions overall, and more of them were *yes/no* questions, when he was writing to deaf students than when he was writing to the hearing student.

The difference in number and type of questions was not as clear when comparing his writing to deaf students ranked at different levels of comprehension. Here, the instructor seemed to be individualizing his writing not only according to perceived level of comprehension, but also on the basis of the students' personal learning styles and levels of motivation. For example, he addressed many more questions to two of the highest ranked deaf students than he did to some of the lower ranked students. He later explained that the two highest ranked deaf students were less willing to take on challenges or adapt to non-traditional methods than some of the lower ranked students were. One of them was a student from Hong Kong and the other was an older student returning to school after raising her children. Both were more comfortable with conventional question-and-answer kinds of structured activities, so he asked them a lot of questions to help give them ideas about what they could write about. He also asked questions of one of these students to motivate her and get her interested, since she seemed bored with the class.

We were also interested in the degree to which the students communicated with the instructor. At first there was little evidence of genuine communication in the writing of some of the students. Some, for example, titled their entries intitially and wrote as if they were writing essays.

> *My Memory*
>
> *I went to graduation from ____ School for the Deaf in 1984. After this I just went to watch my friend was wedding last June 23, 1984. So I talked my mother about "I'll go to look apt in ____." I said. She letted me go and I looked for Apt 5 times a day. Finally I found the apt. It's very cheaper. Then I was happy to started ____College. I felt OK in college....*

It took a few turns for some of them to realize that someone was actually reading and responding to what they wrote, and that they should read and respond in return.

Some students wrote about the instructor in the third person instead of addressing him directly, indicating they were oblivious to the communicative nature of the writing task.

Many students initially ignored questions the instructor asked them, seeming to be unaware that the questions were there to be answered. We found that the higher ranked students tended to respond to his questions and other requests for information ("Tell me if you are writing a true story or a made up story.") or clarification ("Please explain this again...so I can understand it better."), as well as to the content of what he wrote, earlier and more frequently than the lower ranked students did. They also addressed him in the second person, an additional clue that they understood the communicative nature of the writing from the beginning. Some of the lower ranked students took several turns to "catch on," but over time, most of them began to engage in communicative written discourse, asking the instructor questions and responding to his writing.

These findings indicate that dialogue journal writing can be an effective way to individualize writing for deaf college students with different learning styles and levels of motivation and English proficiency and make it meaningful for them. It can effectively draw out even those adults who have had problems communicating in their previous English classes, teaching them to be more effective communicators. §

Notes from the Field

I am a Reading Specialist in a Chapter I Middle School Reading Project in Tucson, Arizona. I am presently completing an Ed. Specialist Degree at the University of Arizona, Department of Reading, Language and Culture. I have been a bilingual elementary teacher in Tucson for the past 10 years, and have a M.Ed. Degree in Bilingual/Bicultural Education.

For the past two years I have been utilizing interactive/dialogue journals with the students in my 7th and 8th grade classes. Many of these students have only recently made a transfer into an English language component. I have been really impressed with the development of vocabulary and expressive use of language which my students have demonstrated in their journal writing. I am currently doing a research study, along with one of my colleagues who is a reading specialist from Indiana University, which will attempt to compare writing styles and use of language in interactive journals with written samples emanating from structured paragraph or "assigned topic" writing in four randomly selected junior classes. •

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Please add my name to the list of teacher educators who enthusiastically endorse dialogue journals. Currently I "dialogue" weekly with 57 undergraduate and graduate education majors enrolled in reading/language arts courses. The time and effort certainly is worthwhile. Journaling provides personal and individually-tailored communication between students ("I'm having trouble with my parents.") and professor ("I could tell something was bothering you."). Private questions are asked and answered and concerns are consciously acknowledged and addressed.

Dialogue journals also serve as the primary mode of "reflection" for my undergraduates in an intensive inner-city field placement. Journals document prospective teachers' concerns ("Help! How do I teach these kids?") and promote "reflective" thinking ("Now I know; teaching is neither one big heartache nor one big picnic."). An analysis of these journals suggests that prospective teachers who sincerely "reflect" about their work improve considerably in their abilities to devise and present appropriate reading/language arts lessons. •

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Observations of Dialogue Journal Use in Second Grade

In a recent research paper on dialogue journals, I summarized my study of the dialogue journal texts of seven second grade students who wrote to me. During the semester period, I found that:

1) Positive interactions occurred in the writing of four of the seven students (57%).

2) At this age, "therapeutic uses" of the dialogue to solve problems, etc., were not frequent; only two of the seven students made use of it in this way.

3) The topics which interested my students most dealt with personal information about themselves and their correspondent. Analysis of their questions provided a very clear picture of their concerns: 74% of their questions were personal ones about me, 10% of their questions were about teaching, 8% of their questions were about school-related topics, and 6% of their questions dealt with philosophical issues ("Why is..."). •

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NEW VOLUME OF BACK ISSUES!!!!

Volume II of the back issues of *Dialogue* is now available. This volume begins with our largest issue, "New Research on Dialogue Journals" (Vol. IV, No. 1, April 1987) and continues from there. So far it contains the research issue and the October 1987 issue, "The Many Benefits of Dialogue Journals: Helping Students Change Attitudes and Behaviors" as well as the history of dialogue journals, bibliography, and abstracts of research reports and dissertations. The price is now $3.00, and it will gradually increase as more issues are added. (Vol. I 1982-1986, available for $7)

DIALOGUE JOURNAL NETWORK

People are now using dialogue journals in many different areas, and we want to provide a way for those of us with similar interests to contact each other. Below are the names, addresses, and phone numbers of those we know who are using dialogue journals in *teacher training, content areas*, with a focus on *reading*, and with *special students*. In the last issue (October 1987), we published a list of people using dialogue journals in teacher education. Those listed here are an addition to that list. If you would like your name added to the list in any of these areas (which we will share with those who write us asking for information) please let us know and we'll add you on. Other areas will be listed in the next issue. ONE AREA WILL BE DEAF EDUCATION. PLEASE CONTACT US IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO BE INCLUDED.

Teacher Training

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NEW PUBLICATIONS

Teresa S. Dalle & Charles Hall. 1987. "Penpal" journals for cross cultural communication. *TESOL Elementary ESOL Education News*, Vol. 10, No. 2, Fall 1987.

Teresa Dalle and Charles Hall report on their research study pairing ESL students in a local elementary school with American students at another elementary school in a very successful weekly dialogue journal exchange. In their analysis of the journals, Dalle and Hall found that many topics in the journals focused on students' sharing of cultural values and information. Both sets of students engaged in repairs of communication breakdowns and in modeling of correct written forms. Modeling was usually not done overtly, but in the context of an authentic response. Participating teachers and students responded enthusiastically to the experience.

Martin, Jill. 1987. Dialogue journals: How one Ohio teacher promotes foreign language communication. *Foreign Language News Notes* (Scott Foresman & Co., Vol. 4, Fall 1987.

Jill Martin, a French and Spanish teacher at Malabar High School in Mansfield, Ohio writes dialogue journals with first year students, who do this writing voluntarily. Her second year students write to her every week as part of their course requirements. Jill has found that the dialogue journal writing allows her to take a personal interest in each student and aids her in classroom management--all while the students are writing freely in the foreign language they are studying.

Martha Dolly. *A study of solicit and give moves in the management of dialogue journal conversation by adult ESL students.* Doctoral Dissertation, Indiana University of Pennsylvania. December, 1987.

Using analytical routines based on conversational analysis and dialogue journal research, Martha Dolly studied the amount of responsibility that ESL students take in advancing or repairing written conversation in the journals. She found the teacher in her study to be very consistent in her interactions with the students. The students, however, demonstrated considerable variety in their interactional patterns. A detailed discussion of Martha's research can be found in *Dialogue*, Vol. IV, No. 2, October 1987, and the dissertation abstract is in both volumes of back issues.

IT'S YOUR TURN NOW!

Using Dialogue Journals with Hearing-Impaired Students

by Cindy Bailes, Susan Searls,
Jean Slobodzian, and Jana Staton

A handbook on the use of dialogue journals with deaf elementary and secondary students is now available. *It's Your Turn Now!* is written for teachers of hearing-impaired *and* normal hearing students and focuses on the effective use of dialogue journals to open new paths for communication, language growth, and understanding.

The handbook is full of wonderful examples of how very young children and high school students can get started in written dialogues. Teacher questions and answers, frustrations and successes are reviewed in a practical, direct way, and a theoretical summary is included.

Three of the co-authors are teachers at Gallaudet's Kendall Demonstration Elementary School and Model Secondary School, and have drawn on their extensive classroom experience using dialogue journals.

TO ORDER: Cost is $9.95 + $1.50 postage, USA. (Postage for Canada, Alaska, Hawaii, Caribbean--$4.50; Overseas--$6.00). Send check or completed purchase order to:

Outreach PreCollege Program
KDES PAS 6, 800 Florida Avenue, N.E.
Washington, DC 20002 USA (202) 429-9292
OR PHONE TOLL FREE: (800)672-6720, Ext. 5342

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

A sharing of dialogue journal data under the theme "Dialogue journals with exceptional students" will take place at the Eighth Annual Ethnography and Education Research Forum at the University of Pennsylvania, in Philadelphia, February 5 and 6. Participants will be Jeff Schultz, Beaver College; Jack Farley, Murray State University; Kathy Stobbs, University of Cincinnati; and others. This is a wonderful chance to hear what other people are doing and even roll up your sleeves and work with their data.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

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Dialogue is the newsletter about the uses, benefits, and theory of dialogue journals, a practice of communicating in writing about topics of mutual interest through continuous, functional conversations between (usually) learners and teachers. This newsletter provides an informal means of sharing information, ideas and concerns among those who are using dialogue journals and studying their uses in the United States and in other countries. It is an outgrowth of two National Institute of Education research grants to study dialogue journal writing with native and non-native English speakers. The newsletter is now produced with partial support from the Center for Language Education and Research (CLEAR), which is funded by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement of the Department of Education. For information about dialogue journal research and practical applications or the work of CLEAR, write: Dialogue, CLEAR, Center for Applied Linguistics, 1118 22nd St., N.W., Washington, DC 20037.

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> *The world needs real dialogue. The only possible dialogue is the kind between people who remain what they are and speak their minds.*
> *— Albert Camus*

The Newsletter about Dialogue Journals
Vol. V No. 1, April 1988

DIALOGUE JOURNALS IN INTERNATIONAL SETTINGS

Although most of our issues of *Dialogue* have focused on the use of dialogue journals in the United States, they are now being used in exciting and innovative ways in foreign countries as well. Where we used to know only scattered colleagues using dialogue journals abroad, 15% of those on our current mailing list are foreign, representing 13 different countries. A network of colleagues overseas have been giving workshops for teachers, so we expect that percentage to continue to increase. The articles in this issue represent the foreign branch of our network, discussing the use of dialogue journals in Germany, Japan, Thailand, South Africa, and in Peace Corps training workshops in Africa. We have also summarized recent articles from other publications about their use in England, South Africa, and Japan. Two articles describe dialogue journal use in the United States, but with a foreign partner (a Chinantec speaker in Oaxaca, Mexico, who periodically comes to the U.S. to work) or a foreign influence (the work of Paulo Freire from Brazil). This truly international issue attests to the wonderful flexibility of dialogue journals. One article, however, by P. J. N. Seme of South Africa, points out very clearly that the practice also depends on a certain kind of context—one in which there is freedom to choose topics and write freely, without externally imposed rules and restrictions. Her article is a forceful and chilling reminder that there are places where the use of dialogue journals could be a dangerous, rather than a liberating experience.

As our network expands far beyond our shores to new populations and educational situations, the concept of "dialogue journal" continues to evolve beyond our first conception of a daily one-to-one written conversation in a bound notebook between a teacher and students in a self-contained classroom. Although the majority of articles in this and other issues have presented this approach, other configurations for written dialogue are appearing as well. The journal partners in Diane Poole's article are not teacher and student at all, but adult colleagues working together to build their language fluency. The students in the classes described by Mary and Chisato Kitagawa (see "New Publications") write solely with the teacher in the lower grades, but in group journals in the upper grades. Previous articles in *Dialogue* have described personal written interactions via electronic mail or local area computer networks.

Perhaps it is time to officially expand the focus of this newsletter to include a wider range of uses or formats for "interactive writing" than just "dialogue journals" alone. Teresa Dalle, at Memphis State University, for example, has written to us describing many different configurations for student-student written dialogues between ESL students and American students from elementary grades to undergraduate and graduate college level classes. She finds that this writing does not have to replace student-teacher dialogue, but can have the additional benefit of giving American students an opportunity for cross-cultural communication, and ESL students the sometimes rare opportunity to communicate at length with an American of similar age.

Nigel Hall has also written to us from England to suggest that we expand our focus.

> *I cannot help thinking that Dialogue would be of more interest to me and many others if it was about all those types of writing which involve dialogue. I am thinking particularly of letter writing (that is letter writing that involves correspondence across time, not one-off letters). I am doing quite a lot of work with letter writing and find the similarities to, and differences from, dialogue journals very interesting. I do find them both valid, which is why I cannot help feeling that Dialogue ought to extend its scope. You will probably tell me now that there is already a journal about letter writing - if there is, do let me know.* §

We don't know of one, and we are eager to embrace other interactive writing approaches. At the same time, we are determined to maintain the original and crucial characteristics that make the traditional dialogue journal a rich and valuable writing experience, lest a dynamic and generative practice be changed and watered down beyond recognition or usefulness. But Hall's challenge has pushed us to think, what *are* the essential features of the dialogue journal that must characterize what we might now call "interactive writing"?

First, the dialogue must take place regularly and over time. A single or sporadic exchange of writing is not really a dialogue. Second, the writing must be open-ended. This does not mean that a focus cannot be chosen, such as the academic content of a course or one's experience as an emerging teacher in a teacher training course. But within such broad guidelines, both writers in the dialogue must be free to reflect on and explore topics as their minds, interests, and circumstances lead them. Assigned topics for writing or types of writing to be done seem to prevent genuine thought and dialogue from ever developing. Third, both participants in the dialogue must share the responsibility for its creation. True dialogue involves both parties, who are openly expressing genuine ideas and showing genuine interest in the other. If one person takes an overly authoritative or evaluative rather than a participant role, the "dialogue" can turn into an interview or a performance.

As Camus states in our new masthead, the world *needs* dialogue, and we would be the last to want to restrict it. With the above qualifications in mind, we are eager to see what new configurations arise! §§ *JKP*

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Dialogue Journal Writing with a Language Associate

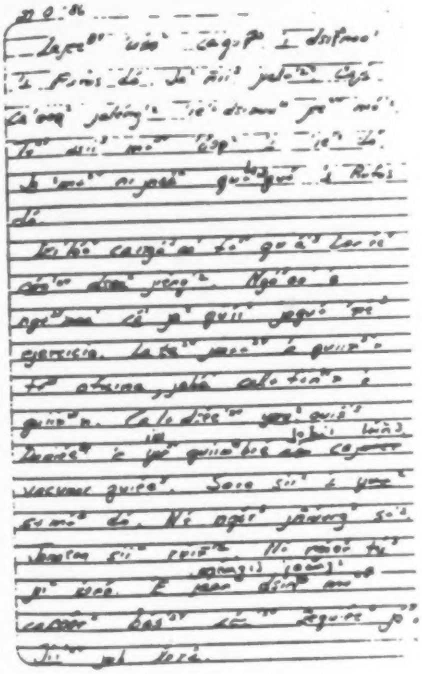
Diane Poole
Summer Institute of Linguistics

Diane Poole and her colleague, Judi Lynn Anderson, are linguists working with the Summer Institute of Linguistics in Tucson, Arizona. They work closely with a "language associate," a native speaker of Chinantec, a language spoken in Oaxaca, Mexico, to learn to speak Chinantec, develop written texts in Chinantec, and translate the Bible into Chinantec. Much of their work has been done in their associate's village, Comaltepec. Because they are currently able to work there only infrequently, he comes to Tucson to work with them.

When I read about the use of dialogue journal writing for promoting language acquisition and literacy development (Peyton, 1986), I decided that it was an excellent approach for my co-worker and I to use with our language associate (LA). Although we had acquired considerable oral proficiency in Chinantec, we needed to improve our written proficiency. We also wanted our LA to grow in his ability to express himself naturally and fluently by writing in his own language. Because he spends several months at a time working with us in Tucson, where the Mexico branch of SIL is currently located, he is away from his village where he is immersed in his language. He tends to lose the sharp edge of naturalness and begins to adapt his speech to our far from natural style.

Our experiment with dialogue journal writing in the native language of our language associate lasted over a five-week period during one of his stays in Tucson. At the start of each day's work we each wrote in our journals for about half an hour or less, about any topic we chose, in Chinantec. Then we came together and read our entries aloud to one another. Our LA read his first, and we made comments about the topic or asked questions about the meanings of words and how these words were used in the given context. Then we read aloud what we had written. Our LA, now in the role of a teacher, asked us questions, usually for clarification because our errors made the meaning unclear. He then corrected our writing, reading, or pronunciation. Topics included our first trip to our LA's village, our appreciation that our LA had come to join us in Tucson to continue working with us, his journey out of the village to travel to the U.S., fiestas in his village, etc. We also wrote about difficulties we were all having adjusting to life in Tucson. Below are an entry written by Judi Lynn (with partial English translation), and the translation of an entry written by our LA.

> **We linguists were learning to speak and write in our second or third language. Our LA, who was in fact the "teacher," was also improving his ability to write in his mother tongue.**



Judi Lynn (translation): *During the night our dog, Rufus, barked. I don't know why. And the coyotes were howling in the mountains. I like it when they howl. And when it got light Rufus barked again.*

LA: *Now in Comaltepec the fiesta of Mii Madsee is approaching on the 20 November. And many people go to that fiesta and take the opportunity to pick oranges because it is the season for them. And the young men also go to play basketball* *because there is a tournament, and many people from other places also go to play. And sometimes they give excellent prizes for the first three places. They have given a bull or a pig or a turkey. So many people get excited about going and think how they can win. And if there are many teams, they play for two days, and if only a few then only for a day and a half.* §

In deciding to use journal writing with our LA, we were facing a different situation than that experienced by teachers in the United States teaching English as a second language. Whereas those teachers write in their native language while their students write in their second or third language, we, the linguists, were not the teachers. All three of us became learners in a sense, working at different levels. We linguists were learning to speak and write in our second or third language. Our LA, who was in fact the "teacher" in this situation, was also improving his ability to write in his mother tongue

We experienced a number of benefits from this experience. Because of the daily practice of writing freely in his own language, our LA gained greater fluency and naturalness in writing, even though he had been writing in his own language for several years. When he was away from his home environment for long periods of time to work with us, he had no opportunity to use his language with anyone except us, whose proficiency is very limited. The routine of daily journal writing gave him the rare opportunity for extended natural use of his language. As a result, his translation of the texts we were working on improved. He was also affirmed as a speaker and writer of his mother tongue, since what he wrote was important enough for us to ask questions about and express interest in.

By writing daily in Chinantec and having our LA ask questions about and comment on our journal entries, we learned a tremendous amount about Chinantec and improved in our control of it in both speaking and writing. Our incorrect language use and thought processes became apparent and were slowly replaced with correct expressions and ideas. When we found, through our oral reading of our entries and discussions of them, that we did not control an aspect of the language, we focused on that area in our subsequent writing and in our daily language use.

We found that the quality of our relationship with our LA also improved. He was able to express some of his feelings without fear or embarrassment, because we had developed a relationship of trust. Possibly because of the journal writing, he shared with us some of his struggles for the first time in the four years we have been working with him. I personally was able to share more feelings and concerns in my journal writing than I had done before, and I found that this seemed to help our LA to do the same. For example, after I had written about the culture stress I experienced living in Tucson (I am from England), he shared some of the culture stress he was experiencing; he expressed some homesickness when he wrote at length and in some detail about current village events, and bewilderment about never knowing what language he would be addressed in--English, Spanish, or his own. Because of the journal writing, we were all willing to share with one another in an atmosphere of interest and acceptance, and the quality of our relationship deepened.

I highly recommend journal writing as an effective tool for developing language and literacy skills, both for linguists learning a language and for the native speakers of that language. Linguists working with a language associate can write in a dialogue journal as soon as a writing system is developed for the language, whether they are in the beginning stages or honing more advanced language abilities. The journal can also serve to increase the naturalness and fluency of the LA's writing skills, so that his or her translation into the language is more natural. Any opportunity that an LA has to write freely and regularly in the native language is going to lead to more natural written language use. Journal writing and sharing allows writing to occur in the context of a relationship rather than in isolation. It is also beneficial for building a relationship between the LA and the linguist and, if done with the right atmosphere, can lead to a level of sharing between two parties that might not otherwise be reached. §§

Reference:

Peyton, J.K. (1986). Literacy through written interaction. *Passage: A journal for refugee education*, 2(1), 24-29.

A Black South African Perspective on Dialogue Journals in a Mother Tongue Language

P. J. Nomathemba Seme

Ms. Seme is currently completing doctoral studies at Harvard University Graduate School of Education, and has been a high school teacher in Black South African schools.

Dialogue journals in the school context are the vehicle through which the individual student expresses feelings, attitudes, experiences, etc. The student shares all this with the teacher who constantly gives feedback, thereby helping the child to clarify thoughts about certain issues or expand ideas. In this type of writing the student is continuously engaged in learning. This process is special because it is not imposed, but arises from the students' main concerns, which can be integrated with learning across a wide spectrum of student interests. It is this *freedom* and *genuine give and take* that is the cornerstone for the successful and effective use of the dialogue journal in general.

As a black South African, I am particularly interested in the use of the dialogue journal in a mother tongue. Dialogue journals can provide the opportunity for the child to express thoughts in a free flowing manner. If children want to test their understanding on some issues and concerns, they can more easily articulate and express them in their mother tongue as they see fit. I realize that conducive learning environments are crucial for all learning. Freedom of expression and good rapport between students and teachers form the basis for the effective use of a dialogue journal.

Having used the dialogue journal with some professors in an American university, I can highly acknowledge its usefulness. The problem arises when I imagine implementing it in my own classroom in South Africa, particularly with my high school students. I can foresee some serious problems and barriers inherent in its implementation, particularly in our Black schools. Given that the dialogue journal is founded on free expression, what can that mean in a South African context where there is none? Can it be that children should only write about some experiences and not others because of fear of censorship and what may likely happen to them later? Even I, as a teacher do not know where this journal may eventually land. How much freedom will I have to respond to the students' concerns and issues?

In a genuine dialogue journal exchange, it is the children's choice to impose limits on what they want to pursue. There should be no external fears that control the child's personal choices, but in South Africa some laws of the country directly and indirectly dictate what we can say or write. Even in friendly letters between black South Africans, one may not safely write explicitly about some of the sensitive issues and events taking place at the moment. Since that is the case, how can dialogue journals give students and teachers the power, courage and motivation to pursue their implementation?

Both the child and the teacher already have fears about their personal engagement concerning sensitive political issues. As a teacher, I know very well that when a child takes this journal home or back to school, it may be lost on the way or that any child may now be picked up by police. Children as young as ten years are now being detained for reasons they may not even understand.

In our black South African schools, there is an imposed syllabus and many controls on the materials we are issued to use. All the children's work is supposed to be accessible at all times to all people connected with the school: for example, other teachers, the principal, and inspectors will come in to see everything the children have written. So again, even in the classroom, the teacher cannot maintain and protect the essential privacy of these written conversations.

If a child and a teacher have engaged in a genuine and free expression, it is possible that a dialogue journal can become a cumulative document of evidence to be misused to incriminate both the teacher and the child.

As a teacher, I have my own fears and frustrations when children share their feelings with me, because I cannot offer any tangible solution to their problems. What is it that I can do to ensure that the information they share with me is secured and confidential? Can they trust me enough to be free in expressing their views if they already have reason to fear that these views may cause problems for them in thefuture? Can I be confident enough to give the best of my responses to their concerns? Subtle fears of betrayal from both sides contribute to these barriers. Having learned of their feelings and experiences, I have a moral obligation to attend to some of their concerns. Suppose students share their dissatisfaction about the kind of education they are getting, or about the problem that next year they will leave school because a father lost his job or even got detained. These are possible concerns the child may need to share, and the teacher will have to give some kind of response. If after hearing about the child's plight, I still cannot give any tangible solution, or soothe their feelings, I begin to ask—what is the use of the dialogue journal in this situation if it can only help generate feelings and reflections about the problems I know I cannot single-handedly solve? While the children learn through writing, they must grow and enjoy it; therefore for a dialogue journal to be used effectively, it must be both enjoyable and helpful.

To say that black students can engage in this written conversation freely in South Africa today is to delude myself because I know very well that this is not true. Students know as well as I do that the system offers no real freedom — so then what? Reality is such that our black youth today are tired of theorizing about their problems, experiences and feelings. They want tangible solutions to problems, particularly the older children. How can I best persuade them and engage them in this activity in such a way that they fully enjoy it? The use of the dialogue journal must be a productive engagement for both a teacher and a child.

To say that Black students can engage in this written conversation freely in South Africa today is to delude myself because I know very well that this is not true.

Lindfors' article on her use of dialogue journals with high school students in a black South African school seemed to me to be a good illustration of the extent to which children are careful about what they write. She remarks:

> *Just as surely as some of the students' topics did not engage me, some of my topics did not engage them; e.g. my questions about women's issues or about the characteristics of good teachers or about how Zulu affixes work. However fascinating these topics were to me, they were of little interest to students.* (Language Arts, *February 1988, p. 138)*

It is hard to tell if her topics were really of little interest to the students or whether they were simply avoided because the children were concerned that they might be asked to say more, which they may not be prepared to do even if the teacher encourages them. The fact that they said little about their families, personal lives (except for talking about movies and birds) and even how they were enjoying school, suggests to me that they were playing the survival game by carefully sifting the issues. The type of rapport between the teacher and the students is crucial in dialogue journal use. The slant these children took in their writing could have been different if they were writing to their own teacher, but even then they would have to be very cautious.

The typical illustration of what any black South African writer faces is best demonstrated in the example given by Nadine Gordimer. She cites the instance of the banning of the book, *Two Dogs and Freedom*, written by black children who were attending a weekend alternative school run by blacks. In this alternative-education center, the children:

> *were asked to draw or write a little piece about South Africa in the future. This one little kid, about 9 years old, drew a lovely little house and all the dream things that he'd like to have and he said, "When I grow up, I'd like to be married and have a son and a daughter, two dogs and freedom" — a wonderful title for the book.* (U.S. News & World Report *May 25, 1987)*

Because of the book's title it created suspicions on the part of the government; as a consequence, it was at first banned. To paraphrase Gordimer, the reason for banning the book was that children had drawn soldiers and guns instead of happy families; others had written about the policemen teargassing the classrooms in the township. This point illuminates some of the problems both teachers and students may face when they encourage and engage in any expressive writing, including dialogue journals.

The questions I posed in the above discussion about whether dialogue journals can be used effectively, or even safely, demonstrate the web in which both teachers and students are caught. For teachers to decide if they want to implement the dialogue journal in their classrooms, I see different options available. First, as a teacher, I could always pretend that students are free to choose the things they want to write about, since the dialogue journal's objective is not to instigate and probe children to write about particular issues and concerns. I regard this as a personal defense mechanism, aimed at denying the existence of the problem. As a teacher, I would be shifting the responsibility to the child by arguing that I will only respond to what the child has chosen to write about. If I take this option, I would be assuming, wrongly, that the students do have freedom to choose. I would call this a "mini-freedom" because besides their own personal choices, there is another subtle choice coming from external forces that will dictate the kind of choice the student decides to take.

The second option is to face reality by actually acknowledging that there is no freedom of expression or privacy for Blacks in South Africa and that the dialogue journal is therefore limited here. These and other options that one can come up with may depend on how individual teachers view the situation and what kind of rapport they aspire to keep with their students when they engage them in learning.

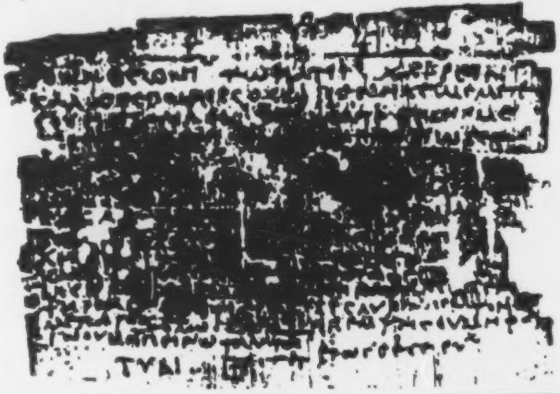
The above discussion demonstrates that in the current Black South African school situation, dialogue journal use in general and even in mother tongue has limitations. If one uses it, both students and teacher can deal with only non-controversial topics This is a challenge to both teachers and students. These constraints on the effective use of the dialogue journal are hard to overcome because they are embedded in the whole school system. For its complete success, drastic changes in the system itself are required. §§

Great Moments in Dialogue Journal History!

The existence of dialogue journals may be a recent phenomenon in their present form, but it appears that human beings, when given access to writing, may have always been prone to carry on direct, lively, uncensored conversations. This new feature, Great Moments in Dialogue Journal History, will bring to our readers treasured written exchanges from history. (CONTRIBUTIONS NEEDED!)

The papyrus manuscript shown below was found in the depths of the great Bodleian Library at Oxford. It is an Egyptian boy's letter to his father, in Greek, from the 2nd or 3rd Century, A.D. Fortunately, the Bodleian provided a translation for those of us who do not read classical Greek. The use of direct threats seems not to have changed much from 200 A.D. to Leslee Reed's sixth grade class!

...It was a fine thing of you not to take me with you to town. If you won't take me with you to Alexandria I won't write you a letter or speak to you or greet you.... Mother said to Archelaus, "He upsets me. Take him away." ...So send for me, I implore you. If you don't, I won't eat, I won't drink; so there!



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Dialogue Journal Writing in the Peace Corps: Enabling the Older Learner

Karen Willetts
Center for Applied Linguistics

As the average age of Peace Corps volunteers increases, the difficulties of older adult language learners has become a major concern. At a recent Training of Language Trainers Workshop at the Peace Corps Training Center in Bukavu, Zaire, I introduced the use of dialogue journal writing and discussed it as a particularly helpful technique in this rather unique language learning situation.

At the Bukavu training center, intensive language learning courses generally last for 6 weeks at 6 hours per day, and aim to bring the language learner from no or little competence (novice level) to functional competence (intermediate) in the foreign language. After training in French (a new language for most volunteers, who are recruited for their technical knowledge), training in one of the African languages begins, and technical training (animal husbandry, fish raising) is given concurrently in English. The African languages at the Bukavu center include Swahili, Lingala, Chiluba, Kikongo, and Sango.

The overall purpose of the workshop was to introduce a competency-based language instruction approach designed to improve language learning by the older learner. Joan Whitney (Language Training Specialist in the Peace Corps Office of Training and Support) and I worked with thirty language trainers from Zaire, Gabon and Central African Republic, most of whom had 5-10 years Peace Corps training experience and were professors at the Institut Supérieur Pédagogique in Bukavu.

The real issue for the workshop was how to make intensive language learning work better for the older volunteer with little or no previous foreign language learning experience. In general, the trainers at the Bukavu workshop outlined the following difficulties for the older learner.

The emphasis can be shifted from tiring oral drills which tax the older adult's short-term memory to this type of more long-term memory activity, organized around functional cognitive schemes.

1. Short-term memory is more limited.
2. Tiredness and fatigue occur more often.
3. Discouragement occurs when they "fall behind" the others.
4. Social isolation can occur because of age differences with younger trainers and other younger volunteers.

As part of the workshop, I discussed at length the benefits of having trainers and older trainees engage in written dialogue in the target language (French or African). Adult learners often need and want written reinforcement which is not traditionally provided in language learning settings, except through feedback on limited grammatical exercises. Since the writing in dialogue journals is not done under pressure or the time constraints of the classroom, older learners may feel more successful when speed is not a factor working against them. Writing and trying to be creative with the new language in chunks of written discourse (rather than sentence-level drills, etc.) should also give the older adult a sense of accomplishment. The emphasis thus can be shifted from tiring oral drills which tax the older adult's short term memory to this type of more long-term memory activity, organized around functional cognitive schemes. Adults can use the strengths they have by integrating new concepts and material into their existing cognitive structures rather than relying on rote memorization. The written dialogue also gives the adult the chance to use the language for meaningful language activity.

Many adults enjoy and need the individualized attention dialogue journals provide, and since the trainer-to-trainee ratio in Peace Corps is very small (average class size around 5), the teaching/learning setting is ideal for this technique.

(continued on p. 9)

(Peace Corps, cont. from p. 8)

Reading the trainer's responses can provide positive feedback and additional language reinforcement. When error correction is handled indirectly through modeling (rather than having red marks for every mistake), older learners can gain confidence in finding their own mistakes. More important, the dialogue between the younger trainer and the older trainee can provide the basis for establishing a better rapport and mutual understanding. If used effectively by the trainer, dialogue journals may help to draw out a "withdrawn" trainee experiencing language and/or culture shock. Older learners may more easily vent their frustrations and better express themselves through the informal written medium. Trainers can then better individualize or tailor their training to learners' specific needs and can easily spot problem areas. Important sociolinguistic and cultural information can also be imparted in the dialogue.

Trainers at the Bukavu Peace Corps workshop expressed interest in using dialogue journals with their trainees. Some of the ideas we came up with for actual implementation of the technique included the suggestion that the adults select the trainer with whom they wish to dialogue (since each trainee will have up to 5 trainers at any one time), and that the principle of confidentiality be stressed and maintained, since trainers have frequent meetings to discuss trainees' problems. In order to maintain trust and mutual confidence, the dialogue journals must not be shared with others. Peace Corps trainers who decide to implement the use of dialogue journals with the trainees will find that this is a pleasurable and successful language learning experience, especially for older adults, and that it will indeed increase language acquisition by this group whose success depends so critically on acquiring a functional competence in the language. §§

NEXT ISSUES

DIALOGUE JOURNALS IN TEACHER TRAINING (FALL, 1988)

A growing number of people are using dialogue journals in pre-service and in-service teacher training. Teachers and teachers-to-be have the rare opportunity to take time and reflect on what they are reading and what they are learning about the classroom, their students and themselves, with someone who has had different experiences with teaching and can provide a new perspective. Teachers who have used dialogue journals are especially ready to begin a dialogue with their students when they finish their training. A lot of you have had some excellent results. Let us hear from you!

Please send articles of 2 to 3 double spaced pages to Joy Peyton at CAL by August 1, 1988).

DIALOGUE JOURNALS IN BILINGUAL EDUCATION (WINTER 1988)

Although dialogue journals in bilingual education programs are no doubt similar in many ways to those used with limited English proficient students in many other settings, they may have some special characteristics and involve some special issues. We want to explore these in the winter issue. Articles may cover topics such as the following, but feel free to write about other topics as well.

- Special attributes of dialogue journals when used in bilingual/transitional programs
- The development of literacy in the bilingual classroom
- Code switching in dialogue journal writing (the use of both the L1 and English)
- Bilingual special education populations

Please send articles of 2 to 3 double spaced pages to Shelley Gutstein, 1910 N. Calvert, #301, Arlington, VA 22201 (Phone # 703-524-6484), by October 31, 1988.

Dialogue Journal Entries as Problem-Posing Codes

Laura Klos
Spanish Educational Development Center

The problem-posing approach to second language teaching, used with adult learners in ESL classes at the Spanish Educational Development (SED) Center in Washington, D.C., is inspired by the work of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire. Freire, who believes that education should be participatory and liberating, advocates discussing social problems in the classroom, with the goal of helping learners to think critically about situations in their own lives. Freire believes that dialogue is central to the learning process, for "true dialogue cannot exist unless it involves critical thinking, thinking which sees reality as a process, in transformation, thinking which does not separate itself from action but constantly involves itself in the real struggle without fear of the risks involved" (Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 1970, p. 62).

Problem-posing activities are one approach advocated by Freire to elicit such meaningful dialogue among adult learners. These activities revolve around the use of "codes"--problem situations that are directly relevant to the learners' lives. A code can take the form of a dialogue, a story, a picture, or whatever the instructor chooses, as long as the problem presented in the code is familiar to the participants. The use of codes provides a curriculum based on material from students' own lives, enabling them to react to and analyze issues that are relevant to them. The codes often elicit strong feelings, and students are less inclined to focus on language form, because they are intent on getting an important message across. Students are put in a position of control, as they identify courses of action which may be solutions to the problem.

Dialogue journals can be an ideal source for codes, because they are often about important issues in students' lives.

There are five basic steps students use for responding to a code.

1. Describe the code presented (e.g., What is happening?);
2. Identify the specific problem involved;
3. Discuss whether the problem presented is relevant to their or their friends' lives, and express any feelings they might have about the conflict;
4. Identify the possible causes of the problem;
5. Suggest any individual or group actions that might alleviate the problem.

Rather than talking through all of the steps, it is better to vary them with activities such as role-playing, writing compositions, discussing in small groups, etc.

The SED Center curriculum provides a multitude of prepared codes related to male/female roles, daily routines, health, immigration, etc., but the instructors are encouraged to create suitable codes as well. During one six-week session I used entries from my students' dialogue journals as codes for class discussion. Dialogue journals can be an ideal source for codes, because they are often about important issues in students' lives. I sought the students' permission before using any entry in class and promised complete confidentiality. To avoid any kind of embarrassment on the student's part, I sometimes changed specific information in the entry that could possibly reveal the writer's identity, or concocted a related situation based on a student entry. This way, the code was still based on the original entry, but the student's identity was well protected.

The following is an example of a dialogue journal entry used in my class as a problem-posing code.

> *I think confusion in my life. Sometime I'm very very boring. I think a live alon all the time. My husband not have time for me. He is only think and work in your life I have differen idea because he is too much years too me.*

Everyone was given a copy of the entry and we corrected it together on the board, identifying specific errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation. We then divided into two discussion groups for the first three steps of problem posing. The situation seemed to be a familiar one to most of the students, and several interpretations of the problem were suggested. Both males and females discussed experiences that they described as "domineering Hispanic husbands." For the fourth step, the students individually wrote essays speculating on the cause of the problem, and then came back together for a class discussion of what they had written. The fifth step involved proposing and evaluating solutions in groups. Suggested solutions ranged from getting a divorce to having a baby, but almost everyone finally agreed that the couple needed to improve their communication by discussing the problem outright.

My six-week experience with using selected dialogue journal texts for problem-posing activities indicated to me that they can be an excellent source for codes that come directly from the learners' lives. For anyone else wishing to do the same, a few points should be kept in mind. First, a code chosen from dialogue journals should represent a situation that could be relevant to everyone in the class, and not a specific personal problem of only one student; otherwise, class discussion can turn into a group therapy session. The problem should be focused on one conflict, since several conflicts presented in one situation can be overwhelming.

Second, the instructor must decide if an entry will be used as a code in the class of the person who wrote it. If students realize that their writing might be used for class discussion, they may become inhibited about writing in their journals. On the other hand, if a class is very close and students are open, they sometimes enjoy discussing their journal writing with each other. Whether or not the codes come from the writing of students in a given class, their permission must be given and their identity strictly protected.

One problem that I encountered was finding enough suitable entries for class use. Building a collection of entries from several classes solves this problem and eliminates the risk of embarrassing students by using their entries when they are present in class.

Dialogue journal entries provide real-life data for problem-posing codes, and fulfill Freire's stated purpose of education: to liberate people, by allowing them to discuss problems that are relevant to them and helping them to realize that they are sources of creative, critical thinking and capable of action in the face of conflict. §

Share *Dialogue* with a Friend!

Dialogue began life as a four-page newsletter in 1982, sent free to people around the country who were interested in the use of dialogue journals. It has grown over the years into a more substantial publication, helped greatly by our receiving a multi-year project grant under the Center for Language Education and Research (CLEAR) in 1985. With this support, *Dialogue* has become a lively forum for discussing both the practice of interactive written conversations, and the underlying theories of human dialogue and language which inform the practice.

During the past three years, we have not sought to increase the subscription base to *Dialogue* beyond the current level of about 500. However, our CLEAR-supported project, and therefore much of the support for the newsletter, will end in June, 1988. With support from the Center for Applied Linguistics, we will continue to produce the newsletter, but in order to keep it in its present form, we will need to expand substantially our subscription base and increase the price for new subscribers with our September 1988 issue (the price for renewals will increase with the January 1989 issue).

Since many of you are in teacher education or in administration in school systems and universities, we know that our potential readership is much larger than those actually on our mailing list. If you know of friends and colleagues who might be interested in subscribing to the newsletter, we hope that you will share a copy with them now, and encourage them to subscribe. By increasing our subscriptions, we can ensure that you will continue to receive YOUR copies at an affordable price.

U.S. Bound Refugee Children Use Dialogue Journals

Kathleen Corey, Elsie Hamayan, and Margo Pfleger

Tong: *Soon I will be in America, so I will tell you about my grandmother who still lived in VN. Now she is about 60 years old. She lived in the island. She had a big garden, mango trees and bamboo trees. She had many things. We had a boat so we could sailed to that island to visit her. When I went there I was very happy because the house was nice and the island was beautiful. I loved my grandmother too much. She loved me, too. But when I escaped to Thailand I didn't say goodbye to her. Now maybe she is old and old. I think that she will miss me to much but I don't know when will I come back to see her again.*

How about you what do you do when you see your grandmother or grandfather? Are you happy when you see them? Do you love them?

Teacher: *It's really nice to know that in a far away country (your very own country) somebody loves you so dearly. Though you can't see your grandmother, continue to love her and to treasure her in your heart. Just pray that you'll see her someday. Maybe you can sponsor her. What do you think?*

As for me, I miss my family so much. My grandparents are already old but they're still strong. I would be very happy to see all of my loved ones. I'm sure you would too, right?

So reads a typical dialogue journal excerpt from a PREP class in the Philipine Refugee Processing Center. PREP, which stands for Preparing Refugees for Elementary Programs, prepares Cambodian, Lao, and Vietnamese refugee children between the ages of 6 and 11 for school in the U.S. by helping them develop the linguistic, academic, and interpersonal skills needed for successful entry into elementary classrooms. In addition to ESL instruction, the program devotes 30 minutes of each school day to reading activities and 30 minutes to writing activities. This focus is based on the belief that children need to spend an uninterrupted chunk of time reading children's literature and communicating their ideas, thoughts, and feelings through writing. These 30-minute periods are dedicated to celebrating the joy of reading and writing.

> **...Children need to spend an uninterrupted chunk of time ... communicating their ideas, thoughts, and feelings through writing.**

Literacy development is an important element of PREP. Since many of the students come from families who are non-literate in their own language, they do not have the benefit of seeing their parents enjoying reading or of sharing reading experiences with them. Lacking the model of a parent who obviously values reading and the experience of sharing a storytime with a loved one, children of non-literate parents may learn only belatedly to value reading as an enjoyable and rewarding experience.

PREP uses non-traditional literacy methods such as the Whole Language Approach to teach reading and writing. Instruction takes into account the whole learner, building on his or her total array of skills and abilities. The focus is on meaning rather than on the mechanics or grammar of language. Thus, activities revolve around specific content in a real communicative situation. For example, the children write letters to real people, an activity that has an authentic communicative function, rather than copying words or tracing letters.

Three methods of developing writing skills are used within the Whole Language Approach in PREP: dictated stories, creative writing, and dialogue journals. Although all three methods have proven successful, using dialogue journals has been the favorite of many PREP teachers. The children write to the teacher for 5 to 10 minutes a day in a bound notebook about a topic of their choice, and the teacher writes back. Many of the entries expand significantly by the end of the PREP pro-

Using Dialogue Journals in Japan

Madeleine Adkins
University of California at Berkeley

Madeleine became interested in dialogue journals when she was working for Joy Kreeft Peyton as an intern at CAL, and used them in most of the classes she taught during a two and a half year stay in Japan (1984-1987). She writes, "I used them with junior college English majors, white collar workers, housewives, steel workers, high school graduates who wanted to study abroad, and teenagers who had lived abroad. I also gave some workshops in Western Japan for teachers' groups."

Japan is an exciting place to use dialogue journals, because they can be adapted for use with students of all ages and experiences, in all walks of life. English language learning programs vary, from the businessmen's summer intensive course to the toddlers' class. Teaching situations vary greatly as well. There are highly structured, formal settings like the university classroom as well as less traditional settings like the after-work classes at students' places of work.

The study of English is, and has been for many years, a popular and economically necessary part of life for many Japanese. Since World War II, English study has been part of the mandatory education system for students in the seventh through twelfth grades, as well as for most college students. In addition, private conversation schools (which offer English and sometimes other foreign languages as well) exist in every corner of the archipelago, run by companies from Berlitz to Sony and everything in between. In any major metroplitan area, there are literally hundreds (if not thousands) of such schools to feed what amounts to an almost obsessive interest among the Japanese people in studying English.

The usefulness of dialogue journals becomes plain when a teacher wants to know why her students are in a particular English class. Students' goals in any given class vary, depending on their situations and on their personalities. Because of the emphasis, economically, academically and socially, on the study of English, there is no way to predict students' motives for learning English. It could be something that parents or employers are demanding of them; it might be "in" with their peer group to study English; or it could be that they have a genuine interest in and love for the English language. Asking aloud in class for students' opinions or feelings or beliefs is usually a fruitless effort, because Japanese people tend to be reluctant to voice their opinions for fear of creating an awkward situation or any kind of open expression of conflict. Therefore, a direct question in class calling for the expression of personal opinions will be met with silence; a similar question posed in a journal can elicit an honest and thoughtful response. Students can feel free to say why they are in the class or how they feel

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*(**Refugee**, cont. from p. 12)*

gram. This result has been a surprise to many of the Philippine teachers, who have been traditionally trained to correct all errors and to require many hours of copying practice before allowing students to write independently.

Teachers report that one of the main reasons that they enjoy using dialogue journals is the strong bond that is created between them and the children. Through this method, PREP teachers have been able to help their young students better understand the difficult experience of being a refugee. Many of the dialogue entries describe the family's flight from their home country or the difficulties of camp life. The children also write about the excitement and fear of going to an unknown place; their journals are full of questions about the U.S.

Dialogue journals have become an important part of PREP. Through the journal, refugee children are able to "talk" privately to their teacher, who not only helps them develop literacy skills, but also counsels them and becomes a trusted friend. §§

about the class, or to "speak up" about personal problems which may be interfering with their performance, without having to speak in front of everyone. This information can be crucial for the teacher in evaluating the students' performance, especially in company courses, where a teacher's negative evaluation can have serious repercussions for the student/worker's career. I found dialogue journals a useful tool for dealing with a number of these difficult situations.

One interesting aspect of teaching English in Japan is that with very few exceptions, the students, no matter how basic, already know some English. The only possible exceptions to this rule would be children who haven't yet entered the seventh grade, and adults whose schooling took place before World War II. Therefore, the teacher can walk into a beginners' class the first day confident that her students will already know quite a few words of English, not to mention quite a bit of grammar. However, most English study in Japanese schools has traditionally featured rote memorization of vocabulary and grammar rules. Spoken English (to say nothing of honest-to-goodness conversational English) is something that is not normally attempted in the classroom. Part of the reason for this is the enormous emphasis placed on testing in Japanese education. English is one of a number of subjects on the college entrance written exam on which students have to score well if they are to get into the right university. Because of this, even many academically stellar students have developed little or no ability to converse in English, and may be extremely reluctant to actually speak out loud.

Dialogue journals, of course, will not directly aid students who wish to improve their pronunciation or their impromptu speaking skills. For this reason, some of my students in conversation classes, especially those who have reached the upper intermediate level, did not find them particularly interesting or relevant. But most students, especially those in "beginning" classes, find that dialogue journals are an exciting way for them to enter the world of English conversation. They can use their already existing knowledge of English grammar, vocabulary and spelling to produce (usually) comprehensible entries from the first day of class. Because they may be terrified of having to actually speak English, the journal is for them a low-pressure environment out of the public eye in which to attempt to produce English for the purpose of communicating.

The fact that most students have already studied English before means that it is difficult to generalize about the actual English proficiency levels in any one class; this is especially true of beginners. A student may be enrolled in the lowest level class for any number of reasons: she may have been out of school for many years and forgotten what she had learned; she may have flunked her English courses all the way through school; she may be that rare student with no knowledge of English; or she may be enrolled in the same beginners' course that all first year university (or private language school) students are enrolled in, despite the fact that she had spent a month in the U.S. on a homestay study-vacation. In other words, the teacher must be prepared for a very broad range of English abilities in a given class. Because the dialogue journal offers an opportunity to individualize communication, it is especially beneficial for the student whose level is way above or below that of the rest of the class. Here is a chance to give support (both pedagogical and psychological) to the student who feels that she is falling behind, and to the student who finds the class to be too easy.

One constraint on dialogue journal use in Japanese public schools is that English classes, especially at the high schools and universities, tend to be extremely large and to meet only once or twice a week. Therefore, there is rarely enough time to give students enough practice or individualized attention. A teacher who has five or six different classes, each with an average enrollment of thirty to fifty students, will find that it is not humanly possible to have dialogue journals with that many students. This is a sad reality, but the teacher can write with one class of that size, or more profitably with any smaller classes that he or she teaches. Private language schools and company language programs, which typically keep conversation class enrollments down to reasonable numbers and try to meet at least twice a week, are therefore more satisfying environments for using dialogue journals.

I found the major benefits of using dialogue *(cont. p. 15)*

Dialogue Journals with Deaf Students in Germany

John Albertini
National Technical Institute for the Deaf, Rochester, New York

In the Federal Republic of Germany, as in the United States, a central issue in the education of deaf students is effective communication: how best to teach deaf students to communicate in German, and how best to communicate with students in the classroom. Believing that German students and their teachers could profit from the systematic use of dialogue journals, I proposed a one-year research project wherein I would 1) introduce the method to German teachers and 2) correspond in dialogue journals with their students. Supported by a Fulbright Research grant and with the help of colleagues at the Research Center for Applied Linguistics for the Rehabilitation of the Disabled at Heidelberg, I have been consulting with teachers and writing to their students since August, 1987.

Eighteen primary and secondary teachers and one school psychologist at four different schools in southwest Germany are participating in the project. Through periodic workshops, I have presented dialogue journals as a means of improving student-teacher communication, giving students a functional context in which to practice writing, and documenting the students' acquisition of German. In questionnaires and interviews, I have documented the teachers' experiences with dialogue journals and their reactions to them. At first, teacher reactions to the idea ranged from cautious-but-willing-to-try to very enthusiastic. A few teachers opted not to participate in the project because they believed that spontaneous writing, with misspelled words and grammatical errors, might be detrimental to their students. Others started and then stopped, because they were not satisfied with the quality of communication that was occurring in the journals. However, the majority of teachers who used the journals for the bulk of the year feel that the contact they have established with their students and the information they have gotten from them are more important than the presence or absence of grammatical errors. Even though classes tend to be small (fewer than 10 students) and therefore allow a considerable amount of individualized teacher-student communication, most teachers feel that they have gotten to know their students even better through the use of dialogue journals. They generally find them to be an interesting and important variation to traditional forms of school writing (dictations and compositions), where great emphasis is placed on mechanical accuracy. In the interviews, I tried among other things to ascertain the teachers' attitudes towards writing and found that those who use writing in their own lives tend to be the most enthusiastic about the use of dialogue journals with their students.

> **...those who use writing in their own lives tend to be the most enthusiastic about the use of dialogue journals...**

I asked the students in two of the schools involved if they would be willing and able to correspond with me weekly. The reason I gave them for this correspondence was that I wanted to tell my American deaf students about the experiences of deaf students in Germany. I told them that writing to me was entirely voluntary and in no way connected to their school work. I soon found myself writing to some 70 students, ranging in age from 8 to 18; about 50 continued to correspond regularly up until the Christmas break. I think there were three things that sparked their interest in writing to me: they were curious about

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(Japan, cont. from p. 14)

journals in Japan to be twofold. For my students, it was their first oportunity to use English as a medium for expressing ideas, concerns or questions; for many it was their *only* experience with using English for genuine communication. For me, it was a chance to concentrate on students' individual needs, and the best way to get past the deferential silence that is so commonly displayed by students in Japan. §§

America and American Deaf education ("Is it really like it is in *Children of a Lesser God*?"); I am also learning German, so they feel on an almost equal footing with me ("Your grammar's not perfect, but I can understand you"); and they are eager to write about their experiences as deaf people in Germany ("You know, these are stories from my soul").

In one high school, I began the journals by asking questions about the students' memories of learning German and learning to write. From the first, these students have written candidly and at length about their parents' and teachers' patience while teaching them to speak; about the strain of lipreading for an entire school day; about the relationships between hard-of-hearing and deaf classmates and between deaf and hearing people. They have written about their families, vacations, goals and friends. For some, the writing has taken on a life of its own, apart from a correspondence with me. One 18 year old, for example, along with questions about the U.S. and requests for career advice, is writing his version of "War of the Planets," with accompanying pen-and-ink illustrations. After the Easter break, I hope to take the writing with these students one step further by asking them if they would be willing to select a piece from their journals, work on it, and publish it in the student newspaper.

At the end of the school year I will be analyzing my data on teacher reactions and student writing. My findings will appear in future reports. §§

NEW PUBLICATIONS

These publications describe dialogue journal use in England, Japan, and South Africa

Nigel Hall & Rose Duffy. 1987. Every child has a story to tell. *Language Arts*, Vol. 64, No. 5, pp. 523-529, September 1987.

Nigel Hall and Rose Duffy report on their study of the dialogue journals that Duffy wrote with her five-year-old students in England. The journal writing grew out of Rose's desire to move the children away from the "cloned" basal reader type writing they had been producing in the classroom. This writing did not reflect the children's highly individual personalities and expressive styles, so their teacher, Duffy, resolved to experiment with a new type of writing, dialogue journals. The journals were presented to the students in a way that piqued their curiosity and sparked enthusiasm for the new task. At the beginning, the children borrowed extensively from each other for spellings, but later grew less dependent on this strategy. The teacher engaged in various writing strategies designed to elicit writing from the students. After some experimentation, she found that making statements rather than simply asking questions (her original strategy) resulted in much more genuine writing by the students.

In analyzing the journals, Hall and Duffy found that over time the children's writing became more individualized and varied in the journals. Children whose previous classroom writing had been uninteresting produced lively, meaningful texts. The children quickly developed a clear sense of audience, and gained confidence in their ability to spell new words. They also took great pride in their writing and in their ability to share it with an interested reader.

Mary M. Kitagawa & Chisato Kitagawa. 1987. Journal writing. In *Making connections with writing: An expressive writing model in Japanese schools*, pp. 53-66. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

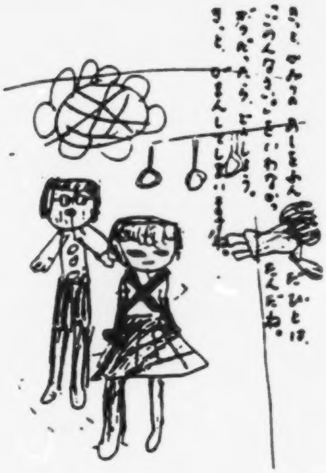
In this book, Mary and Chisato Kitagawa describe *seikatsu tsuzurikata*, or "life experience composition," a writing movement that has been practiced in various parts of Japan for around sixty years. Dialogue journal writing is one part of this whole language program. In the chapter on journal writing, they describe how teacher-student dialogue journals are used from the first grade all the way through high school. Young children start out with picture journals, explaining what their picture said orally or in writing. This example comes from one such journal.

The child wrote:

This morning on the way to school on the train a stranger *stepped on my foot. I did the same thing back to her and then she glared right at my face. I was embarrassed. She had glasses on. I was scared.*

The teacher responded:

I guess the person who stepped on your foot did not say, "I'm sorry," did she, Kaori? I wonder what I would have done. I'd probably have ended up just taking it.



Copies of interesting entries are made for the whole class and used as the basis for an entire lesson.

The teachers have worked out some helpful ways for handling issues that all of us have faced. For example, students are required to turn in the journal, whether or not they have written in it. Therefore, reluctant writers, who turn in a blank journal, get a response from the teacher anyway, one that addresses some important thing in the child's life. "Few children can resist writing a line or two after reading about three of these messages" (p. 63). Some teachers regularly (around once a week) write hints on the board to help stumped writers, like: "Today in school, what were the times you volunteered to speak? At those times how did other students react to what you said?" A variation on the teacher-student journal that takes some of the burden of writing from the teacher in the upper grades is the "revolving journal," which is passed among a small group of students and the teacher.

As the students move to higher grades, they begin to explore their own thinking about controversial societal problems and issues. "Their early training of writing their own reactions assures that their voice will be present even when the subject matter moves from primary to secondary involvement with the topic" (p. 64).

Judith Wells Lindfors. 1988. From "talking together" to "being together in talk". *Language Arts*, Vol. 65, No. 2, February 1988, pp. 135-141.

Judith Lindfors provides another view on dialogue journal use in a Third World setting. She was working with teachers of English in Zulu schools in South Africa, through the University of Natal, and decided that engaging some Zulu students in dialogue through dialogue journals would "teach me what I needed to learn."

What is most impressive and significant about Lindfors' account is that she captures the first difficult moments of a dialogue, in which a teacher often must "actively search in my head for a relevant bit to place in my entry," and feels the strain of being "consciously polite" in discussing student topics in which the teacher simply has no interest (in her case, extensive discussions of American TV and movie stars).

Lindfors' examples demonstrate clearly the difference between "talking together" and "being together *in* talk." Even in the polite stage of "talking together," Lindfors points out that the students and she were learning about one another and building a relationship, keeping the interaction going, and that students were writing for a variety of purposes which they did not do in their classrooms: teaching, inquiring, joking, informing, scolding, offering, requesting, seeking clarification, complimenting, apologizing, explaining, expressing opinions, etc.

But it was when the writing went beyond talking together, and student and teacher discovered a mutual topic which both cared about, that the dialogue ceased to be work, and became a means of personal encounter. Not surprisingly, topics from family life, such as the death of a father, provided bridges to the kind of mutuality or "co-membership" which is the hallmark of being together in talk. §§

ERIC: A Valuable Source of Information About Dialogue Journals

What is ERIC?

The ERIC Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics (ERIC/CLL), operated by the Center for Applied Linguistics, is one of a nationwide network of 16 clearinghouses that constitute ERIC (Educational Resources Information Center). ERIC's objective is to make current developments in educational research, instructional methodology, and teacher/administrator training readily accessible to the public.

Dialogue journals are now a descriptor in the ERIC Indexes. Listed here are papers about dialogue journals not published elsewhere or published only in hard-to-find journals. (The bibliography in both volumes of back issues of *Dialogue* lists dialogue journal materials readily found in books and journals.) These documents may be read on microfiche at your local ERIC collection—usually in university libraries—or they may be ordered from the ERIC Document Reproduction Service at the following address:

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Notes from the Field

ENGLAND

"The extensive use of dialogue journals in England seems relatively recent. I'm sure that there have always been teachers here who did something like dialogue journals, but it was always very idiosyncratic and unusual. Rose Duffy and I worked on the study reported in *Language Arts* (see Article Review) about four years ago. I got the idea from *Language Arts*, so there was poetic justice in having it published there. Rose presented it at the Manchester Literacy Conference (an annual conference that I run to introduce teachers to new ideas and interesting people in the field of literacy) and so many people found the idea appealing that it was soon being incorporated into classrooms up and down the country. Some of these people were from our National Writing Project and dialogue journals are now used in many of the regional branches of that project. The National Writing project was set up in England about three years ago specifically to involve teachers in examining their practices in the teaching of writing. Dialogue journals are being used particularly frequently in the content areas of the curriculum."

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SECOND LANGUAGE LITERACY IN CANADA

"In the Early French Immersion program in Ontario Canada, the instruction in Senior Kindergarten and Grade One is done entirely in French. When entering grade one, the children still speak mainly English. The teacher-researcher in one grade one class provided the children with a whole language progra. From the first day of school, these five- and six-year-old anglophone children wrote in French in their dialogue journals. The researcher wanted to find out if children who were at a stage of beginning literacy in a second language would write in that language as do children their age writing in the first language.

And write they did! Going through the stages of drawing, copying words and invented spelling, they started to create meaningful texts. During the entire school year they were self-motivated writers who wrote with verve about their personal experiences. In the process of writing, these beginning writers developed their Second Language Literacy."

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The Newsletter about Dialogue Journals
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> *The world needs real dialogue. The only possible dialogue is the kind between people who remain what they are and speak their minds.*
> *– Albert Camus*

INTERACTIVE WRITING IN TEACHER EDUCATION

As Suzanne Irujo points out in her article in this issue, it is very difficult to find educational activities that are meaningful for teachers as well as the students they will teach. But dialogue journal writing is one such activity.

In this issue, we present the explorations of a number of teacher educators in the use of dialogue journals with prospective and practicing teachers. One common use is between prospective teachers and their professors or supervisors in teacher training courses or practice teaching situations. Besides the obvious benefit of giving new teachers direct experience with a technique they can use later with their students, there are others — extended, individualized contact between a new teacher just entering the field and one who has had considerable experience in it (if the dialogue is with the professor or supervisor) or with others having similar experiences (if the dialogue is among fellow students, as in Jessie Roderick's article). New teachers have opportunities to reflect at length and in private about classroom experiences, concerns, successes, or failures; discuss relationships between educational theory and teaching situations; and "try out" new vocabulary and concepts presented in course readings and class discussions to make them their own. The supervisor can follow the new teachers' developing perceptions of their teaching situations and of themselves as teachers, and participate in that development. Finally, in many teacher education courses, the focus of discussion is on "critical incidents" that occur in the practicing teacher's classroom. The journal provides a good place for recording such incidents, and therefore a valuable resource for class discussion.

While there are many benefits, a word of caution is in order. As with any effective practice, the success of dialogue journals in teacher education depends on the context in which they are used and the participants' perception of their purpose (see Courtney Cazden's article).

A second major use of dialogue journals is between students in a teacher education class and students who are similar to those they will eventually teach. This approach has been used especially in TESOL programs, in which prospective teachers are paired with students learning ESL. The new teachers gain direct experience with beginning and maintaining a written dialogue with students, but in a supervised situation in which they can seek help and discuss problems they may have, with the course professor and other students in the class. The journals provide a real situation for applying language acquisition and learning theory, as teachers in training observe, analyze, and form hypotheses about the language acquisition processes of their writing partners. At the same time, the ESL students have the opportunity to interact in writing with a native English speaker other than their teacher.

With this issue we are also beginning a new feature of the newsletter — a "centerfold," that addresses specific issues related to practice and problems in maintaining interaction. This time, the focus is the question of questions. §§ JKP & JS

WHY USE DIALOGUE JOURNALS IN TEACHER TRAINING?

Suzanne Irujo
Boston University

As a teacher trainer, I am constantly looking for techniques I can use in my classes and training sessions that demonstrate the approaches I would like my teachers-in-training to use in their own classes. However, it is very difficult to find activities that work as well with adults as they do with children or adolescents. Pre-service and in-service teachers are usually very good about participating in activities which are really designed for their students, but the full benefits of experiential learning are not realized unless the activity also works with adults. This is one of the reasons I find dialogue journals such a useful tool in teacher training.

I have used dialogue journals in several different teacher training situations, and in each case there was one aspect of their use which proved to be particularly beneficial. In an undergraduate student teaching seminar they were a source of "critical incidents" to be discussed during class. In a large graduate level in-service course with students from varied backgrounds, they became a means of individualizing instruction. With a student doing a directed study, they provided a way of maintaining contact when we didn't meet every week. In each case, both the teachers-in-training and I were overwhelmingly enthusiastic about the process of dialogue journal writing and the benefits which we derived from the journals.

Perhaps one of the greatest advantages of using dialogue journals with prospective teachers is the way the consistent feedback provided in the responses motivates the writer to keep a journal. Journal writing is widely used as a way of getting student teachers to reflect on what is happening in their classrooms, and also as a source of critical incidents for discussion during student teaching seminars. However, there is often wide-spread resistance on the part of student teachers to writing journals. When I was using traditional "monologue" journals with my bilingual and English as a second language student teachers, most of them wrote their journal entries during the last five minutes before class started. Whatever had been "critical" about an incident was forgotten in the rush to get something — anything — down on paper, and true reflection about classroom interactions was superseded by a frantic combing of the memory in order to satisfy the requirement. The change which took place when the journals became a dialogue was dramatic. Resistance disappeared, both the quantity and quality of the entries increased, and there was never a shortage of critical incidents for discussion during the seminar.

The benefits of using dialogue journals with a large class of in-service teachers were also great, in a different way. These were bilingual and ESL teachers with varying degrees of experience, who were being trained in new methodologies. Much of their journal writing consisted of describing and commenting on their implementation of these methodologies. They used their journals to record successes and failures and to ask questions and request futher information about specific techniques. The journals allowed me to individualize my instruction to a much greater degree than I could have done otherwise, because of the size of the class and the wide variety in teaching backgrounds. I got to know students better, got their feedback on the content and conduct of the course, and had a sense of how well they were assimilating the readings and discussions. However, the ability to help all of the teachers apply what they were learning to their own classrooms on an individualized basis was the major advantage of using dialogue journals in this situation.

In a directed study situation, the dialogue journal met a different need. I had been reluctant to accept the request of a pre-service teacher to do a methodology course as a directed study. I would not be able to meet with him on a regular basis, and I feared that it would be difficult to ensure any carry-over of theory into practice. We agreed, however, to combine readings, observations, materials evaluations, and lesson and unit planning with a weekly dialogue journal. In this journal he would comment on the readings and other assignments in light of his previous experience as a student teacher of English and his future ambition to teach English as a second language. I was able to monitor his reading and his understanding of what he read, as well as ensure that he was making connections among the readings, his student teaching experience, the classrooms he was observing, and his own view of the teaching/learning process. In addition, it was a rewarding experience for both of us. Our apprentice-mentor relationshp grew into one of friendship as the semester progressed, and we hope to continue the journal through his first year of teaching.

I think that the key to the success of dialogue journals in all of these situations is the feedback they provide. As human beings, we all have a need to be listened to and understood on a one-to-one basis, and dialogue journals allow that in a way which few other techniques do. The anticipation of seeing how the other person responds to your entry is a powerful mo-tivational force. To the teacher-in-training, the use of dialogue journals says, "This professor is listening to all my little worries and really cares about how I do in the classroom." To the teacher trainer, dialogue journals say, "I'm getting through to this teacher, and what we're doing is going to make a real difference in the classroom." That's what teacher training is all about.

And of course there is the added advantage of having teachers-in-training actually experience a technique which will be invaluable to them in their own teaching. §

FOLLOWING STUDENTS' PROGRESS IN AN EARLY FIELD PLACEMENT PROGRAM

Janet Clarke Richards
University of New Orleans/Lakefront

Dialogue journals are an important component of our early field placement program for public school teachers. In this semester-long, cooperative venture, junior-year education majors report to an inner city elementary school two mornings a week. They attend reading/language arts demonstration lessons and lectures and teach small groups of children.

Each week the prospective teachers write in their journals their thoughts and feelings concerning their classroom experiences. Two university supervisors in charge of the program read the journals and write comments intended to encourage them to reflect further about their work ("Why do you think your lesson went so smoothly today and you had such a rough time last week?"). Responding to the supervisors' journal comments stimulates the future teachers to address consciously their pedagogical successes and failures and to consider alternative instructional strategies. They gradually learn to extend their reflections to broader educational issues ("Why do all fourth grade children have to read out of fourth grade texts? Who decides this?").

In addition to reflecting about pedagogical actions and concerns, the field placement participants send and receive private and personal messages through the journals. They are free to write their questions ("Tell me please! How do I handle her?"), complaints ("Get a school nearer the university"), and problems ("My mother doesn't talk to me"), and the supervisors respond ("You can handle that little girl. Be fair, firm and consistent"; "We travel to this school because we want you to develop expertise in teaching inner-city children"; "It's sad about you and your mother. Let's talk").

Carefully read journals can help supervisors understand whether particular placements are conducive to their growth.

We have discovered that carefully-read journals can help supervisors understand how teachers are reacting to their field placements, and determine whether particular placements are conducive to their growth. In a study utilizing a "Constant Comparative" method of analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1975), Richards & Gipe (1987) identified and classified four levels of concerns in prospective teachers' journals and plotted the change in their concerns over the course of one semester. We found that:

1. First week concerns tended to focus on feelings of inadequacy. ("Somehow I am afraid. I was awake every hour on the hour. What do we teach these kids?")

2. Second/third week concerns focused on feelings of satisfaction. ("This is easier than I thought. I hope my first job goes like this!")

3. Mid-semester concerns involved blaming others. ("These kids are like monsters. My first grade class is horrible.")

4. Semester's end concerns were more outwardly focused, on their students and the teaching profession. ("It was my fault they didn't understand."; "I now know that teachers are special people.")

> **Teachers who showed the most improvement in their ability ratings had written the largest number of reflections.**

In a second study (Richards & Gipe, 1988), we compared novice teachers' ability ratings early and late in the semester with the number of reflective statements they made in their journals. Those teachers who showed the least improvement in their ability ratings had written the smallest number of reflections (4-20). Many of these statements had a negative tone ("Spare the rod and spoil the child with these kids!"). Those teachers who showed the most improvement in their ability ratings had written the largest number of reflections (34-42). Those teachers unanimously rated "superior" in teaching abilities (both early and late in the semester) wrote a mid-range number of reflections (16-25).

These results suggest that the journal reflections of novice teachers can help their supervisors determine whether their classroom experiences provided the right conditions for growth (Maslow, 1968). Apparently, the teachers who made little improvement in teaching abilities were overwhelmed by the responsibilities of the field placement. Rather than reflect on their experiences, their foremost concern was simply surviving in the situation. These teachers may need a less challenging second field placement, in which they feel more comfortable and can grow (Maslow, 1968, points out that there is a relationship between feelings of safety and growth). The teachers who improved considerably in teaching abilities found the field placement to be a challenge which they could meet, and they were able to work through their pedagogical dilemmas through reflective thinking and writing. The teachers who were unanimously rated "superior" in teaching abilities even at the beginning of their training did not feel compelled to reflect about teaching, since they apparently had few teaching problems. A second, more rigorous field placement, which would provide some ambiguity and challenge may influence them to reflect about their work in order to succeed. This reflection may pull them into new levels of professional growth.

Dialogue journals will continue to be an important component of our early field placement program. Journal writing encourages prospective teachers to reflect about their work and facilitates communication on a personal level between them and their field supervisors. At the same time, it helps the supervisors understand their students' concerns and questions more fully, and provide field experiences that will promote reflection and growth. §§

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GAINING INSIGHTS INTO THE PERCEPTIONS OF NOVICE TEACHERS

Donna Brinton, University of California at Los Angeles
Christine Holten, California Lutheran University

Recent research has reported the benefits of using dialogue journals as a tool for teacher training in methodology and field practicum courses. Porter et al. (1987), and Irujo (1987) report in anecdotal form on the use of dialogue journals in training ESL and bilingual teachers. In a more quantitative study, Roderick (1986) categorized the dialogue journal exchanges between a methodology professor and pre-service elementary teachers, comparing category frequencies in the first and last entries.

This study, like that reported by Roderick, reports on the use of dialogue journals as an interchange between the supervisor and novice ESL teachers enrolled in a field practicum, quantifying the types of student comments made in the journals and tracking the changing nature of this commentary over time. The ten-week field practicum, ESL 380K, was a required component of the MATESL program offered at the University of California, Los Angeles. Student participants attended weekly seminar meetings, spent 40 hours in an adult education setting under the supervision of a master teacher, taught a minimum of eight practice lessons in the field, were observed and videotaped on site, and reflected on the practicum in the form of discussions with the supervisor and in their dialogue journal entries.

The decision to implement dialogue journal exchange as part of the course requirement grew out of the desire to establish better ongoing contact between the supervisor and course participants. Participants were asked to comment freely on any issues of interest related to the practicum experience, and to submit their entries to the supervisor on a weekly basis. The supervisor, in turn, responded to the entries, giving opinions where elicited. At the end of the term, students and supervisors agreed to allow their dialogue journals to be analyzed for the purpose of this study.

The journal entries themselves formed the main data bank, and were supplemented by a retrospective questionnaire asking participants to rate the value of each course component including the dialogue journal exchange. The researchers coded the journal entries for comments falling into each of nine thematic categories: 1) student population, 2) instructional setting, 3) curriculum and methodology, 4) methods and activities, 5) techniques, 6) materials, 7) role of the teacher, 8) lesson organization, and 9) awareness of self.

The frequencies of comments in these categories were noted and examined for change over time. Comments concerning methods and activities, techniques, and lesson organization formed the most productive categories, and the number of comments in these categories increased over time. Comments about materials were slightly less frequent; in contrast, comments in the less productive category concerning the student population decreased over time.

Overall, the above trends indicate that student awareness of crucial aspects of teaching deepened as their experience in the classroom increased. Students did not comment frequently on the issues of curriculum or methodology. However, attention to these issues would require looking beyond the individual classroom to a macro-level context — a task which was not feasible in a ten-week practicum.

In conclusion, the study was effective in establishing categories that concern the teaching act and context. Further, the students' retrospective high evaluation of the dialogue journal component of the course indicates the perceived value of the technique applied to teacher training. Specifically, the study points to the dimension dialogue journals add to a field practicum by providing a channel for systematic communication between the two parties and allowing the supervisor, in a limited way, to be present in the classrooms of all novice teachers.

An additional benefit of the journals is that they provide a form of scaffolding for novice teachers since the supervisor, by virtue of her experience, can help participants make sense of both the negative and positive experiences of the practicum and can transform the field praticum into a collaborative effort. Finally, dialogue journals

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MAKING WRITING REAL IN TEACHER IN-SERVICE WORKSHOPS

Ruthellen Crews
University of Florida

Dialogue journals are a powerful tool for generating writing in my language arts methods courses for elementary teachers, but I had not used them in in-service workshops until three years ago. When I was working with a group of teachers over several months to help them implement process writing in their classrooms, I initiated journal writing by telling them that I wanted to get to know them personally, and I was eager to hear about their results from using process writing with their students. I handed out brightly colored file folders in which I had stapled a dozen pages of lined paper and said, "Think of this as a written conversation that you and I are carrying on throughout this period of in-service. We can tell each other and ask each other anything we wish."

The teachers' initial reactions were disconcerting. Most seemed surprised, even threatened, by my invitation to write dialogue. It took coaxing to get some of them to write a first entry. In fact, one teacher wrote, "If I had known I would have to do this, I wouldn't have taken this workshop. I've *never* been able to write! I'm PETRIFIED!"

Before we finished the workshop, most of the teachers wrote more fluently than in the beginning, even the "petrified" one. One male teacher wrote at the conclusion of his final entry, "I've written more to you than I've ever written to anybody — even my wife."

Prior to initiating dialogue journals with my next in-service group, I presented material from Shuy (1988) and Peyton (1988) on the importance of dialogue writing as a bridge from oral to written language. In addition, I included information from Britton and associates (1975) who reported that only about 4% of the required writing in the classrooms they observed was expressive writing. I elaborated on the importance of expressive writing in the elementary grades and praised the dialogue journal as an excellent type of expressive writing. Finally, I explained that they would learn how to use dialogue journals in their own classes by writing with me during the workshop. Then, I handed out the journals and repeated what I had said to the previous group. Presenting this activity as a learning experience that could be carried over to the classroom was met with enthusiasm from the participants.

The success I have had with dialogue journals in these workshops has been gratifying; I enjoy dialogue writing and so do the teachers. Generally, the topics that appear in the journals fall into the following categories:

1) *Writing as misery.* Many of the teachers tell me how difficult it is for them to write — anything! One teacher said, "I've always hesitated to ask children to write (I mean creative writing) because I've never felt successful about anything I've written, and I've certainly never enjoyed it!" One wonders how a teacher who has never associated pleasure with writing can be successful at teaching writing.

2) *Writing as therapy.* Quite a number of teachers air their feelings about a variety of things that are bothering them. For example, a teacher in my last workshop told me in her initial entry that she did not expect to get much from the workshop because she was going through a nasty divorce and her mind was not on learning anything new. At the end of the two and a half weeks, she told me that after one of our sessions she

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(Gaining, cont. from p. 5)

journals promote reflective writing about the novice teachers' talents and techniques, and provide affirmation of their emerging craft as teachers. §§

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went home and wrote for over an hour about this divorce and the pros and cons of her marriage. "Journal writing," she said, "has made it possible for me to think logically about my marriage and my divorce. This has made a big difference in my life. I'm much better able to deal with it now."

3) *Writing as a process.* Many of the journal entries describe teachers' reflections on how *they* go about writing. If they are really buying into the philosophy of writing as a process, they comment on how unfair teachers are to expect children to complete a piece of writing in one sitting and to turn it in for "correction." They raise many thought-provoking questions about how to teach children to view writing as a process.

4) *Writing to share personal information.* The bulk of the comments and questions are about families, human interests, or everyday events at home and at work. A value of the journals is that they establish a sense of mutuality between the workshop leader and the participant. The informality encourages ease in communicating ideas and feelings, and participants are able to talk directly about their thoughts and concerns.

Do I believe in dialogue journals? YES, and I intend to continue using them in my classes and workshops! §§

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Dialogue Journals Popular Topic at Conference in Israel

Dialogue journal writing is a new concept to most English teachers in Israel, and it was a very popular topic at the 2nd International Conference on Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages held in Jerusalem, Israel, on July 17-20, 1988. Two papers at the conference generated a tremendous amount of enthusiasm.

Margaret Porat and Helen Raik, local Israeli teachers, gave a presentation in which they introduced the technique of using dialogue journals in the classroom and discussed their experience with a class of Israeli high school students learning English. They were particularly interested in the effect that the teacher's input had on the students' output.

Christine Meloni, assistant professor of EFL at George Washington University in Washington, DC, presented a paper entitled "Expressing Personal Concerns in Dialogue Journals." Christine presented an analysis of 22 journals written by foreign students in GW's English for International Students Program, focusing on the students' use of dialogue journals to communicate personal problems. She made comparisons between male and female students and between students from five different geographic areas (Africa, Asia, Europe, the Middle East, and South America).

MATCHING PURPOSE AND PRACTICE: DIALOGUE JOURNALS IN GRADUATE SCHOOL

Courtney B. Cazden
Harvard Graduate School of Education

I've used dialogue journals in graduate courses for two years — used them well in two different courses at Harvard and poorly in one course at the (summer) Bread Loaf School of English. The moral of my experience is, once again, that no form of expression and communication is good in and of itself; value depends on fit to purpose in context.

The two Harvard courses are a proseminar required of and limited to beginning doctoral students in the program in "teaching, curriculum and learning environments," and a course on "classroom discourse" open to any students in the school and even from other schools at Harvard (e.g., the Divinity School from which several women came last spring).

The students in the proseminar are all experienced practitioners being asked to transform themselves, at least for the duration of their graduate school careers, into more theoretical thinkers. Class sessions and writing assignments require beginning attempts to relate practice to theory, spontaneous to scientific concepts, in Vygotsky's terms. I orchestrate the course, with colleagues as frequent guests, and — as chair of the department — also try to monitor how the first semester is generally going. Frequent individual conferences with all the students are impossible, and dialogue journals are the perfect alternative. I encourage three kinds of topics: reactions to the substance of this course, tryouts of ideas for the three short assigned papers, and questions or comments about any aspect of their developing program of study. Half the group hands in their journals each week, so each student gets about six chances for such conversations, and I can find time to respond at some length to each.

In "classroom discourse," the students are more diverse; most have been teachers, but some come straight from a BA and others are experienced in research. Here the purpose of using dialogue journals is to reflect on connections between our shared course content (readings, small peer group conferences, oral reading of transcriptions as play scripts, etc.), and personal experience — as a current student in this course and other courses here at Harvard (but preserving anonymity of both faculty and other students), as a past student in school and college, in the teaching role, or in any non-family educational setting. The frequent result is narratives of personal experiences with varying degrees of analysis, that seem to be useful to the students, that are always interesting to me, and that would be impossible to incorporate into our limited class time. Sometimes pieces of the journal become seeds for a final paper — for example, a speech and language therapist brought together the implications of new ideas for her clinical work with children, and her consulting role with teachers. As with the proseminar, half the class hands in their dialogue journals each week.

In both these Harvard courses, dialogue journals functioned as an alternative, and complementary, medium of teacher/student communication. In contrast, at Breadloaf this was not the case. Here the students are mostly high school English teachers, plus a few from elementary school and college and a few non-teachers here to work on their own writing. My course always focuses on relationships among talking, thinking and writing. Each summer I've asked students to keep journals about connections between course content and their experiences as either teachers or writers, but journals for themselves alone. Because of student self-selection (into English teaching in the first place and then to the Breadloaf program) and the isolated Vermont mountain campus that encourages self-reflection in everyone, dialogue is not needed to keep people writing. And, because I teach only one course and have no other responsibilities, time for frequent oral conferences is not a problem.

This summer I taught the second half of a course begun by someone else, and she had started a form of dialogue journals. I inherited her tradition and continued it. But there seemed to be no non-redundant purpose to these dialogues, and the existence of an audience (me) diminished the journal's value as unmonitored expression by and for the writer. In this admittedly special context, I wouldn't use dialogue journals again. But this experience has made me realize anew the importance of thinking hard about their purpose in each particular course.

I have also realized even more the importance of being honest with students about how the dialogue relates to the work for which they will be evaluated. I never explicitly evaluate their dialogue (though their contents inevitably color my perceptions of the writer). That much is clear. What was less clear in the course on classroom discourse to the students or to me, was the difference in my expectations about student writing in the journal vs. research projects or the take-home exam.

For example, after a heated discussion of gender influences on classroom talk, one student mentioned in her journal some consciousness-raising workshops she had led. I asked her to say more. She did, not in the journal but in response to one alternative ("Ask and answer your own question") on the take-home exam. In that context (the exam), I was disappointed that she "simply" retold a past experience without providing evidence of any new thinking about it as a result of the course. Yet her response would have been appropriate in our written dialogue had it occurred there. She was perceptive and forthright in explaining to me how she had been misled. And I learned that opening up a more authentic channel of classroom communication creates new ambiguity about the traditional channels, and can increase students' vulnerability if the new mix of role relationships is not openly acknowledged. §§

NEXT ISSUES

INTERACTIVE WRITING IN BILINGUAL EDUCATION (WINTER 1988)

Although dialogue journals (and other forms of interactive writing) in bilingual education programs are no doubt similar in many ways to those used with limited English proficient students in many other settings, they may have some special characteristics and involve some special issues. We want to explore these in the winter issue. Articles may cover topics such as the following, but feel free to write about other topics as well.

- Special attributes of dialogue journals when used in bilingual/transitional programs
- The development of literacy in the bilingual classroom
- Code switching in dialogue journal writing (the use of both the L1 and English)
- Bilingual special education populations

Please send articles of 2 to 3 double spaced pages to Shelley Gutstein, 1910 N. Calvery, #301, Arlington, VA 22201 (Phone # 703-524-6484), by November 15, 1988.

INTERACTIVE WRITING IN EARLY ELEMENTARY EDUCATION (SPRING 1989)

Researchers have recently made tremendous gains in understanding the processes and development of beginning writers, but there is a great deal more to be learned. In this issue, we seek articles focusing especially on this population, and we hope that the students studied will include native English speakers, students learning English as a second language or some foreign language, "special students" (learning disabled, gifted and talented, etc.), and students at very beginning stages of literacy development. Issues addressed might include things like the following.

- How to begin a program of interactive writing with these students
- What special factors must be taken into consideration with this population
- What early writing patterns look like
- What patterns of development occur over a given period of time (like a year)
- What role technology might play in interactive writing with beginning readers and writers
- In what content areas (math, science, foreign language, etc.) dialogue journals might be used.

Please send articles of 2 to 3 double spaced pages to Joy Peyton at CAL by March 1, 1989.

PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS OF MAINSTREAMED SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS WRITE THEIR WAY INTO A NEW DISCIPLINE

John H. Hoover, University of South Dakota
Beth Clark & Jack W. Farley, Murray State University

The Special Education Department at Murray State University advocates the use of dialogue journals with exceptional students because of the beneficial aspects of interactive writing with this population: the opportunity for literacy practice in a functional context; the ability to communicate with a specific audience, which is important when learning to write; and the individualized feedback students receive.

Although pre-service special education teachers at Murray State University regularly receive training in using dialogue journals, the Special Education Department has only recently initiated their use with pre-service regular teachers who have mainstreamed special education students in their classes. Elementary and secondary teachers taking a mainstreaming course are now encouraged to keep dialogue journals with their professor, who was previously a special education teacher. A rich sample of written interaction is now available for research purposes, and several trends regarding dialogue journals in mainstreaming courses have become evident.

1) Experiences working directly with handicapped students during their practicum profoundly affected many of these prospective teachers, and they wrote extensively about this in their journals. Although we cannot document that this writing always resulted in positive feelings on the part of the teachers toward their experiences with the handicapped, it did allow for ongoing communication between the professor and the preservice education students about this issue.

2) An initial impression of the participant observer/professor is that students increasingly discussed topics pertaining to special education, and in some noteworthy cases, adopted the technical vocabulary introduced in the course. In one sense, the purpose of studying a discipline (Special Education) is not solely to learn the concepts of that discipline, but also to encourage the use of the professional vocabulary from that field. Dialogue journals allow the professor and students to use discipline-specific vocabulary in a professionally relevant conversation.

3) The participant observer/professor systematically tended to "speak" in the journals in styles similar to those of individual students. In addition, topics discussed and styles of expression tended to be related to the age, sex, and interests of students. For example, the professor wrote extensively about football when a male student was a football player and about marriage and family relations with several adult, female students. §§

The authors will present findings regarding their exchange of dialogue journals with both preservice teachers and mildly/ moderately handicapped writers at the Third Annual Miami University Conference on the Teaching of Writing, Oxford, OH, Oct. 21-23, 1988.

Notes from the Field....

I teach English and social studies for Denver Public Schools, at M. L. King Middle School. I have often regretted that there is so little time in the course of a school day to simply talk to and get to know students. So, when I was introduced to the idea of dialogue journals, by my aunt, Cyndy Shelton (who teacher for Los Angeles Unified Schools and has used dialogue journals for years), I became quite enthusiastic.

I will begin using dialogue journals this fall with my sixth graders. I see many potential benefits, as well as a few pitfalls. I believe I am the only teacher doing anything like this in my school, if not in my district or even my state. In order to feel less alone in my endeavor, I would like to receive your newsletter.

Chrisanne La Hue-Johnson
109 West Cannon Street
Lafayette, CO 80026

Special Pullout Section: QUESTIONS QUESTIONS QUESTIONS !

Jana Staton

" *My students won't answer my questions -- and I'm getting frustrated. They just go on to other topics, and ignore what I write.*"
- a fourth grade classroom teacher.

" *After 4 weeks of using dialogue journals with my adult ESL learners, we've fallen into a question-answer routine: I ask a lot of questions, and they give me short one-word answers. How can I get them to write more?*
- An experienced ESL teacher at the Community College level.

What does it mean when students don't respond to questions, or else give just minimal responses and don't really "answer". Is it arrogance, lack of comprehension, a sign of failure of the dialogue itself? Puzzlement and frustration over questions is a consistent thread in teacher's discussions of dialogue journal use.

I first encountered this phenomenon with college teachers of deaf students at Gallaudet University, in 1982-83, when teachers first started using dialogue journals in various English classes. 2-3 weeks into the term, I began getting one phone call after another from the teachers complaining that the dialogue journals "weren't working".

Students simply weren't answering their questions, no matter how often, or how many they asked. The teachers were feeling anxious and out of control. For several weeks, my colleagues and I pursued various explanations, such as "inability to read". But that seemed -- and proved to be -- ludicrous.

Only gradually did the teachers and I learn, together, that questions do not work the same way when they are embedded in the complex, multi-topic text of a written conversation, as they do in oral exchanges. In fact, questions by themselves are not always particularly useful in these dialogues.

Quite correctly, most teachers view questions as the way to "get students to think" and to "force them to write more, to tell me more." These expectations are based on long experience in the classroom, and familiarity with the obligatory nature of questions in classroom teaching, as in most other oral interactions. But these expectations don't always hold up in written interactions. In other words, the intention behind asking a lot of questions may be good, but the linguistic form for accomplishing the intention sometimes gets in the way.

Examining the assumptions behind our expectations and intentions in using questions is useful as way to begin developing more effective strategies for accomplishing the same goals: active, thoughtful involvement and responsive interactions on the part of students. Let's look first at what research has shown about questions in these written conversations, and then examine what language strategies do seem to work in this context.

WHAT RESEARCH TELLS US ABOUT QUESTIONS

Questions in oral interaction have an obligatory force -- they require an answer. A lack of any response is considered a strong message -- of defiance or perhaps even lack of comprehension. Whether or not they realize it, teachers use questions in the classroom,as a primary means of establishing and maintaining power. By asking questions, teachers actually assert their right to dominate. Researchers who observe classroom interactions call these "control questions" (Goody, 1978; Peyton, 1988).

On the other hand, in dialogue journals, there is no need to struggle for control; if control becomes an issue, the dialogue usually ends. Questions posed only to make the student "think" may be perceived as control strategies, and therefore ignored. Even what seems like a sincere and gentle request (from the teacher's point of view as the asker) in the dialogue journal may be experienced as a interrogation by a student.

Several studies have analyzed what happens when a teacher and student get caught in a pattern of question-asking out of the teacher's need to "make" the dialogue go a certain way. Morroy cites one incident in which the teacher "urged a student several times during the course of their interaction to answer her questions. Instead of attending to the teacher's questions, however, this student (who had previously been quite prolific) dramatically decreased in his writing, to a point where he almost stopped altogether." (Morroy, 1985)

Hall and Duffy (1987) have studied five-year-olds in beginning dialogues with their teacher. They observe that when the teacher "was following the way that teachers often talk to children in classrooms...doing all the asking of questions...the children were simply replying...and not actually entering into the dialogue." (p. 526). Later, when the same teacher began to make statements on topics in a natural, conversational way-- we would say, to elaborate-- the children began "branching out on their own and engaging in meaningful written conversations."(p. 527).

What many teachers participating in these written dialogues for the first time need is some relevant standard of comparison for what can be expected in an effective written exchange. Our study of one teacher's successful practice with both native and second-language students -- Leslee Reed -- may provide some help. Her use still stands as a model of highly effective dialogue journal use, with lots of mutual thinking together, and with students introducing and elaborating on topics.

What we found is that the response rate of both students and teacher to questions in these journals is around 75% or less. In a fall sample of sixth-grade students (all native English speakers), students answered only 43% of her questions, in the spring, 67%. Mrs. Reed answered 67% of all student questions in the fall, 76% in the spring (Peyton, 1988), with no apparent hindrance on the flow of conversation. With a sample of her ESL students, who were chosen from among the least English language proficient of the class, the average response rate of students moved from 42% in the fall sample to 53% in the spring. Mrs. Reed's response rate to student questions was about the same for these ESL students as for her native English speakers. We also found that she asked few "display" or information questions, and her total questions, as a percent of all her language functions, was between 10 and 15% -- which may be a good average(Shuy, 1984). About half of her questions to students were requests for their opinions.

In another study of the effectiveness of teacher strategies, Peyton and Seyoum found that Reed's questions elicited more elaborative responses when they were embedded in elaborative contributions especially for more language proficient students (in press). But overriding all variation due to teacher strategies was simply the power of an interesting topic to write about.

The studies support the argument that effective, interesting dialogues in writing do not require a 100% response to questions on the part of either participant. Both teacher and student are free not to respond to questions without incurring any direct sanctions, in a way impossible in ordinary face-to-face conversations.

"But how can I get students to respond and write more if they don't answer my questions?

This, as it turns out, is the real concern many teachers have, and it's a good one: it lays bare the potential of dialogue journals to encourage students to become full-conversational partners in a mutual dialogue. To do this, teachers eventually find their way to more sophisticated strategies than just Q & A routines.

WHAT RESEARCH TELLS US ABOUT ALTERNATIVES

Some help can be found in recent work by J.T. Dillon on the use, and effectiveness of questions in classroom settings. Dillon has examined numerous classroom discussions, and found that even in the face-to-face settings in which responses are obligatory, questions do not lead to the higher-order thinking claimed for them (1983). He suggests that teachers instead use questions only when genuinely perplexed -- that is, restore questions to their original function of seeking new information unknown to the requestor, eliminating their use as indirect commands to "display knowledge".

Among the alternatives to questions which Dillon found most effective in actually stimulating students to think and elaborate are: openly stating one's own opinions or ideas, declaring one's own perplexity about the student's meaning and giving the student a chance to rephrase, and inviting the student to elaborate more. Our own extensive text analysis of dialogue journals supports this: students at all ages seem to respond readily to a direct and open invitation to elaborate on a point.

In addition, I want to mention a new study by Lindfors which underlines the crucial importance of context and topic in making questions work. In a study of questioning strategies in dialogue journals she kept with Zulu students during a visit to South Africa (see also Dialogue, Spring, 1988 for a review of an earlier article), she stresses that in the context of having a strange new teacher, "Students were very eager to find out about American life, as eager as I was to find out about Zulu life. We had reasons, real ones, for finding out about each other." (emphasis added).

Because there were natural reasons in these dialogues for questions about differences between American and Zulu life -- a shared puzzlement and curiosity -- both Lindfors' questions and those of the students became genuine and functional.

Lindfor's work points to an underlying goal of the dialogue: to create opportunities for students to ask questions, not teachers. Most of us have forgotten that in the much-idealized Socratic dialogues described by Plato, each discussion actually began with Socrates' disciplies asking him questions, not the other way around.

To summarize, research has shown that in a good written dialogue, all questions are not answered, that too many questions tend to stymie rather than encourage student response, and that alternatives to questions are more effective in achieving elaboration, "thinking together", and student questions.

So, in our dialogues, the goal is to find and encourage topics which lead to student questioning, not to perpetual reliance on teachers as questioners. How to do this? Here's a summary of the most workable strategies teachers have reported using in dialogue journals, which empower students and move them toward taking a more active, questioning role. We'd be interested in others which have worked for you.

Strategies for Some Common Problems

Problem: My students aren't writing much, and aren't even answering my questions !

Strategies:

o **Reduce your question frequency** and use questions only when you don't know the answer, or are genuinely puzzled.

o **Invite student comments and opinions directly** - Questions are often indirect requests for elaboration, opinions; make what you want clear in a polite way using invitations and directives: "Please tell me more about..." or "I'd like to know your opinion about...".

o **Elaborate on topics:** say something interesting about a topic the student has brought up, which will invite questions and more writing, by giving the student something new to write about.

o **Be patient** -- most of these problems happen in the first few weeks of a written dialogue, and it may take students several weeks (especially if you aren't writing daily) to get the idea, and to find interesting topics. Research with older (college-age) students at Gallaudet found that about 10 exchanges was necessary before student and teacher found interesting topics they both wanted to write about (Staton, 1984).

Problem: The DJ has turned into an interview. I'm doing all the work, and my ESL students like it that way !

Strategies:

o **Create new patterns for variation:** New language users often fall into patterns, which do help them use language more fluently. So we suggest creating more patterns for them, to break their dependency on Q & A routines. You might try telling stories or jokes, and inviting them to do the same in response.

o **Make your own entries more interesting.** Some teachers call this "sprinkling juicy tidbits" along the way, so that students are bound to ask you a question. [An in-class practice might be helpful here, to ensure that they know they are equals and allowed to ask questions.]

o **Introduce a more controversial topic, and invite their opinions.** It's easy to fall into a bland, noncommittal response writing which is devoid of content, contrast or spark.

Appropriate topics will vary, from cafeteria food or strange American sports at the primary level, to lifestyle issues and cultural conflicts for older students. Controversial topics are already part of your students' lives and thinking, and make for powerful conversation.

Problem: I have first grade students who
aren't tuned in to my questions
OR my comments. What can I do?

Strategies:

o **Start by reading aloud their entries and yours.** Young beginning writers do seem to fit the Piagetian pattern of egocentric speech -- at first, they aren't going to understand that this journal is a dialogue. If you enact it with them, as a mini-reading lesson, they'll catch on.

o **Talk with the class about what makes a good entry.** It's OK to model what you expect, and ask students to suggest how the dialogues could be more "connected." They already know how to talk on the phone -- this isn't that different.

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Suggestions from Leslee Reed

[These comments from a forthcoming book (Staton and Reed) on dialogue journal use focus on strategies for getting students to take on more responsibility and interact effectively in the dialogue without overusing questions.]

I try to always let the student initiate the topic, and then build on that topic, maybe by supplying information, or asking a question that is a genuine one-- one that I don't know the answer to. It often helps to ask them to be a little more specific about some aspect of a topic that they have introduced.

For children that you want to get a little more involved, you can ask questions about experiences that you know are of interest to them. "Did you prefer this or that?" so that they have a choice to make. When they have given their opinion, then you can go further in exploring with them why they liked it better. I tend not to ask information questions; I'm more interested in their opinions about things:

Another general approach I use is to ask their advice. "We have some extra time on Friday: what do you think we should do?" You can take them into your confidence about your thinking and your problems: "I need to get the class more involved in choosing their own books for sustained silent reading. Do you have any suggestions about what would work?" It's so flattering when anyone asks us for an opinion. I love to do it when I'm starting a bulletin board. I'll appoint a committee and then in the journals, I will ask each one for suggestions. Often, they are dumbfounded that I'm not just telling them what to do, but asking them to think and to give me ideas. Students are very important people but we very seldom give students the opportunity to show their worth. "Your group seems to be having trouble. Is there some way to improve it, make it more worth while?"

Even comparing lessons is a good topic: if we worked on fractions yesterday and today, I might ask if they understood it better today than yesterday. I always tell my students that I am trying to be a good teacher, but that I have a lot to learn, and they can help me by telling me in their journals about my lessons, about what worked for them and where they had difficulty. Were they good, or bad, or boring? If a lesson was boring, why? I use the journals to help the students become part of the teaching team."I don't want to teach them something they already know.

PEER DIALOGUE COMMUNITIES: RECREATING THE CURRICULUM

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College of Education, University of Maryland

"I found that my partner - could see profoundly different meanings in my statements from what I had intended! (Do I question my writing ability or praise our different ways of looking at things?)"

"For me, the dialogue jorunal has been therapeutic. Sometimes, class discussions move so quickly that I have to abandon an idea which interests me in order to keep up with the talk. With a dialogue journal, I can follow through on an idea, work out the knots, and get some feedback. Some ideas which might never have been thoroughly examined and/or developed are allowed to grow."

These reflections on what it meant to participate in peer-peer dialogue writing were written by students in a course I taught on design and evaluation in curriculum specialties such as English and science. Although the class members varied in age, academic background, and life experiences, they all held at least a bachelor's degree and were working toward a master's degree in education. At the end of their program which focused on research, repertoire (teaching), and reflection, they satisfied elementary or secondary school certification requirements.

This time I asked the students to engage in dialogue writing with another class member instead of with me. Each week, partners wrote an entry on their own time in which they commented on the main course text. Then, during the first 15 to 20 minutes of the class student partners exchanged journals, read their partners' entries, and wrote a response. Although for years I have asked my students to do dialogue writing, prior to teaching this course I had always been one of the dialogue partners. Now I was an outsider. I did not participate nor did I see their entries, and I was curious. So I asked the group to write a brief essay at the end of the semester on what it meant for them to participate in this form of interaction. The themes which emerged as I studied the essays are discussed in the remainder of this article. It is important to note that in this particular class the dialogue communities were formed by my pairing students in the order in which their names appeared on the alphabetized class list.

Themes Derived from Student Reflections

Initiating the dialogue or conversation was a persistent theme. Dialogue partners described their interactions as beginning with intellectual comments that focused on public knowledge — in this case the course text — and moving to more personal and emotional concerns such as "getting to know my partner's feelings and values." This progression was not surprising since with one exception respondents described their partners either as persons with whom they had not had an opportunity to talk with more than casually or had had no propensity to do so.

Even though more intellectual concerns marked early interactions, the care with which they were planned and initiated revealed a deep interest in the significant other in this shared context. Preparing to enter the convesation meant "organizing thoughts coherently before writing," "making entries intelligible and interesting," and "articulating clearly and interestingly, and formulating ideas concisely, logically, and coherently." Accompanying this careful preparation was the desire for a response, as evidenced in one participant's resolve to "create statements that invite response." Planning initiations and seeking immediate thoughtful response suggested that these dialogue partners were context-sensitive (Ricoeur, 1981) to a significant other and to the multiple meanings that can be created in interpretive communities (Fish, 1980).

Since these students were preparing to be teachers, they naturally looked for pedagogical applications of their course experiences. The dialogue writing was no exception. In fact, 90% of the respondents commented on this area, with one student speaking exclusively to it. Some saw peer-peer writing with older students as a feasible alternative to teacher-student journaling that could be used in any subject, "even math." Dialogue writing was also perceived as a tool that would enhance writing and thinking processes across the curriculum.

Suggestions for Teacher Education

My students' reflections on peer dialogue writing confirmed my belief in persons as co-learners and co-creators of knowledge. Even though a teacher who is more experienced or expert is often seen as a necessary partner in a learning-teaching experience (Vygotsky, 1962), the adult interpretive communities in this class attested to having learned with, from, and of each other. Perhaps this peer-peer dialogue is one way of freeing adult students from dependence on the teacher and of achieving what Scudder and Mickunas (1985, p. 43) perceive to be the goal of education — "to transfer authority from the teacher to the student."

Furthermore, the values my students saw in peer dialogue writing support efforts to create communities in which students encounter newness in persons, meanings, and knowledge — social contexts in which persons can "maintain, establish knowledge, challenge, and change it" (Bruffee, 1984, p. 650). These dialogue communities also provided time and space to discuss personal items that did not fit class time; to reflect on life experiences; to see "links between concepts from readings and life experiences"; and to "unleash frustration." Several students who perceived themselves as timid about speaking in a large group appreciated the opportunity to express ideas in a less hurried setting. Commenting on this, one student offered, "Communicating with a partner is less intimidating than in class. I felt like a contributing participant not an onlooker."

As a teacher who creates contexts designed to prepare persons to teach, I am called to respond to my students' reflections on the particular context I created for them. I cannot ignore the comfort they felt in having opportunities for more intimate conversation (even with someone they didn't know well), more control over the pacing of an activity, and in more freedom to express personal meanings. For it is observations and perceptions such as these that I use to test my assumptions about persons, knowledge, and learning, and to monitor the curricular orientations which guide my teaching.

For me, peer-peer dialogue writing parallels the reconceptualist (Pinar, 1975) and personal relevance (Eisner, 1985) orientations to curriculum which provide opportunities to seek personal relevance, to create meaning, and in general to understand the human experience of education individually and in shared relationships.

Dialogue writing might also be viewed as an example of interactive curriculum development in which partners confront public knowledge and their responses to it. In this conversation the everyday worlds of the two partners — the world of the program they are completing, the world they have left behind, and the world they anticipate — are brought together in personally meaningful ways with the world as perceived by the authors of their assigned readings. This dialogue becomes part of their personal curriculum giving credence to the proposal that "all life's or curricular quality" (Schubert, 1986, p. 423). §§

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TESOL TEACHERS IN TRAINING DIALOGUE WITH ESL STUDENTS

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At Wright State University we have a training program for teachers of speakers of other languages (TESOL) and a program in English as a second language (ESL), for international students learning English. One of the goals of our TESOL program is to provide the students with an understanding of their role as teachers in the second language acquisition process, including an understanding of the nature of the English produced by nonnative speakers. One goal of the ESL program is to expose the students to native English used in meaningful contexts. Dialogue journals meet both these goals.

Early in the TESOL program, students take a course in second language acquisition. As part of that course they are required to maintain a dialogue journal with one or more students in the ESL program. For the ESL writing courses, written journals are passed back and forth. For the spoken English class, the students maintain oral dialogue journals, exchanging audio cassette tapes. The TESOL students take home the journals, read or listen to them, respond, and return them to their instructor in their next class period. The journals are then passed on to their partners in the ESL courses by way of the course instructors.

Partners are given some general guidelines for maintaining the journals. They are told to write from one to two pages or to record for two to three minutes. They begin as they would in any new friendship, introducing themselves and giving information about their families and interests. From there the dialogue moves in whatever direction the partners wish to go. Although the ESL students often ask their partners to correct English mistakes for them, the TESOL students are instructed not to make direct corrections, but instead to model the correct forms in their responses.

The TESOL students serve as mentors and begin to practice the skills they will need as teachers. They provide a native language model on which the ESL students can build, give feedback to help them, modify their language production, and encourage them to express ideas by asking questions.

The TESOL students also analyze their partner's language production in the journals, thereby gaining insights into the variety of language spoken by that person. They are required to maintain a separate journal in which they record observations regarding the variant linguistic forms found in the dialogue journals. This language production is analyzed in light of the content covered in the second language acquisition course, that is, in relation to contrastive analysis, error analysis, interlanguage patterns, language universals, and learning theory. Afterwards, the TESOL students share these observation journals, which focus essentially on language form, with their classmates.

Unlike face-to-face contact, the permanent nature of the journal allows the linguistic observations to be kept separate from the communicative process. Only after the students have read or listened and responded to the content do they go back and analyze the form in detail. This also allows the personal nature of the journal to be preserved, while permitting the entire class to benefit from the linguistic knowledge obtained from the dialogue journals.

In addition to linguistic information, the dialogue journals also convey cultural material. While the TESOL students learn about cultures different from their own, they also share information about American culture with the ESL students. This knowledge becomes particularly meaningful because of the personal involvement that develops in the journals.

Dialogue journals, therefore, serve to prepare the TESOL students for their careers. While these future teachers are learning about the second language acquisition process in class, they are actively involved in teaching with second language learners and analyzing their language production. At the same time, the ESL students are engaged in meaningful communication with a native English speaker, who is gaining expertise in helping non-native speakers to become more fluent in English. §§

APPLYING THEORY TO PRACTICE IN ESL DIALOGUES

Ann M. Johns
San Diego State University

Like many teacher trainers in this country, I am responsible for a basic course in ESL methods, a class which is designed to introduce students to current theory and practice and to provide them with opportunities to apply their knowledge to real situations. The biggest stumbling blocks I face in these undergraduate classes are the students' lack of teaching experience and their unfamiliarity with the basics of English grammar.

A year ago, I began to search for some assistance for what the majority of my students needed: a communicative teaching/learning experience which also provides opportunities for becoming more aware of and analyzing English usage. At the same time, several teachers at San Diego State's intensive English program, The American Language Institute (ALI), were exploring opportunities for increased contacts between their students and Americans. Fortunately, the ALI teachers and I found each other and began a dialogue journal exchange which has benefited both their students and mine.

This is how our exchange works. The ESL students from two ALI writing class levels begin the exchange through introducing themselves to the students in my theory and practice classes in informal letters. These first letters — in addition to succeeding ones — are delivered weekly to my class by two of the ALI students, at which time they have an opportunity for some face-to-face interaction with American teacher trainees. During this initial period, I ask the trainees to read several articles on the purposes of dialogue journals (e.g., Staton, 1981; Sadow & Spack, 1983; Kreeft, 1984) and some papers by my ex-students on the value of this tool in the classroom. Thus prepared, they begin their weekly dialogues with the four to six ALI students to whom they have been assigned.

> **The primary benefit is exposure to an important and versatile technique firsthand which, in some cases, rids the students of their earlier distaste for the commonly-assigned personal journal.**

Throughout the semester, my trainees examine a pedagogical grammar and read analyses of causes of errors (Celce-Murcia & Hawkins, 1985) and *indirect* methods for dealing with them (Hendrickson, 1986). They are discouraged from correcting student errors in the journals; however, since some ALI students insist upon correction, a few trainees have relented. At the semester's end, after eight dialogue exchanges, my trainees prepare a paper, described in my syllabus in the following manner.

The purpose of this paper is to discuss the experience of dialoging with ESL students. The report should be a solid one, with special emphasis upon what you attempted, upon the kinds of errors students made in their writing, suggested reasons for these errors, and the benefits and pitfalls of the dialoging technique. The report should have three parts: a brief introduction to dialogue journals; a discussion of your goals for each of your students and efforts to attain these goals through the journals; and your classification and analysis of student lexical, grammatical, mechanical and orthographic errors.

Establishing this kind of dialogue exchange can be difficult administratively: cooperating teachers must be found; methods for organizing and exchanging papers must be developed and perfected; and alternatives for students who drop out must be established. However, the benefits to my teacher trainees far outweigh any administrative difficulties we have encountered.

The primary benefit is exposure to an important and versatile technique firsthand which, in some cases, rids the students of their earlier distaste for the commonly-assigned personal journal. Here is Michael's comment.

In order to clear my conscience, I must confess at the outset that my initial response to the dialogue journal assignment was far from favorable. The very word "journal" triggered nightmares about the daily *diaries that I, like other college freshmen, was forced to keep for my English class. I spent hours composing in that diary, only to receive a check mark in the grade book for each entry...How quickly my ignorance and preconceived misconceptions were transformed. This was obviously my first exposure to dialogue journals and to their uniqueness and underlying purpose...*

In addition, the trainees assessed their attempts to attain the goals discussed in the literature on written dialogues. According to Sue, one such goal was "to elicit as much production as possible." The sympathetic trainees were able to encourage most ALI students to produce increasingly fluent, varied and personal prose, but they were also exposed to adult students who refused to cooperate. Sue speaks of Masashi, an English language teacher from Japan, who fell into the latter category:

> *In two letters with almost no errors, he repeated and repeated the importance of knowing grammar. But he was so possessed with grammatical correctness that he couldn't find anything to say. He was the epitome of the ALM student who makes correct sentences but doesn't communicate.*

The trainees were determined to elicit discussion of a variety of issues. The ALI students often began by discussing the predictable topics raised in their classes such as hobbies and employment, but later they wrote more personally about their homesickness, their culture shock and their disappointment in what they perceived as a lack of progress in acquiring English proficiency.

In addition to providing an opportunity to experience some of the benefits and difficulties of dialogue journals, this project enabled the trainees to integrate some of the theory, methods and techniques, not directly related to journals, to which they had been exposed in my class. Pam noted that "...the (dialogue) writing experience was valuable because it was compatible with the Natural Approach and Communicative Language Teaching that seek to develop language learning and its functions through real communication situations for the students." John took a related tack.

> *I believe that the dialogue experience went very well because the students themselves generated a variety of language registers and rituals. In their letter-dialogues, they were creative, fresh, and always questioning their environment and social interactions with Americans. They used these social registers and rituals in a natural way.*

As the trainees discussed their strategies, their knowledge of Communicative Language Teaching often came to their assistance. John spoke of some of the writing functions he was able to elicit from his correspondents:

> *I was able to encourage invitations to events, invitation refusal, leave-taking, apologies, asking for personal information and asking for academic information.*

For Cedric and several other students, there were personal benefits to being exposed to students from other cultures. He said, "We dialogued for eight weeks, during which time I felt that I acquired five new friends."

It is important for my teacher trainees to understand and appreciate the dialogue journal and to integrate this understanding with teaching theory. However, it is also crucial for future teachers to recognize, classify and discuss student errors. Though they were discouraged from directly identifying ALI students' errors while dialoging, the trainees were required to xerox each ESL paper and, at the end of the semester, to discuss errors in these papers in their reports. This error classification did not interfere with the communicative purposes of their letter exchanges; instead, it provided an excellent opportunity for the trainees to identify errors in context and to hypothesize about their causes (e.g., student fatigue, negative interference, overgeneralization). It also encouraged speculation about how errors should be ranked in importance (e.g., as global or local) and how they could be approached in the classroom.

This experience with dialogue exchange has been an excellent one for all concerned, as responses by ALI students and increased trainee sophistication indicate. I highly recommend all of its features, including the grammar emphasis, for teacher training classes. §§

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ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES JOURNAL

Welcomes articles about using dialogue journals in content classes. This journal publishes articles and research notes reporting basic research and the application of research to teaching method- ology from the perspective of English for specific purposes, including topics such as second language acquisition in specialized contexts, the effectiveness of various approaches to language learning and teaching, and teacher training.

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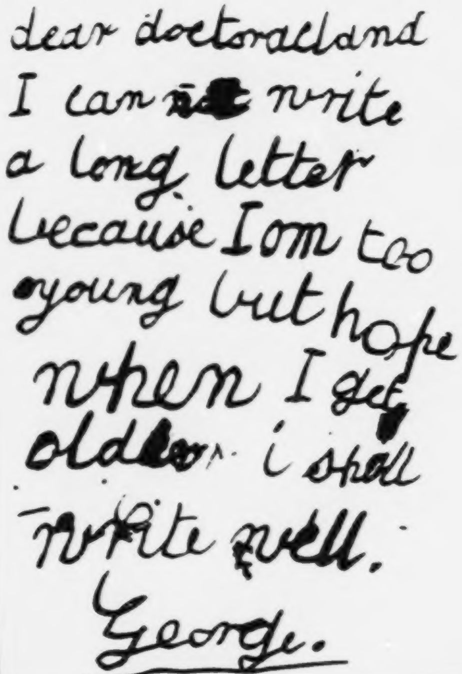

dear doctoracland
I can [illegible] write
a long letter
because I om too
young but hope
when I get
older i shall
write well.
George.

Great Moments in Dialogue Journal (Pre-) History

...uncensored written exchanges from the past

Well, everyone has to start somewhere... perhaps even kings-to-be could benefit from dialogue journals!

[A letter from King George V (of England) when a child to Sir Henry Acland, his father's honorary physician]

TESOL/ESL DIALOGUES: SOME CHALLENGING FINDINGS

Marjorie Champion & Teresa Dalle
Memphis State University

One requirement of a graduate course in ESL teaching methods at Memphis State University was that the students (referred to here as TESOL students) correspond through a dialogue journal with students learning English as a second language (ESL students). Originally designed as a means of providing experience in cross-cultural communication for the TESOL students, the project resulted in some interesting findings which may provide interesting areas for further research.

The TESOL students, who initiated the correspondence, were given only very general guidelines for their writing (some techniques for questioning, modeling correct English, and asking for clarification). They were reminded that the ESL teacher must develop and experiment with different strategies to facilitate effective communication, and that the success of their written correspondence would depend at least in part on their skills in doing so.

One of the obvious benefits of such a pairing was that TESOL students were exposed to the English of nonnative speakers, to means of expression that may be unusual or awkward, and to different cultural views. Since many of the TESOL students were elementary and secondary teachers with little or no experience with ESL students, the dialogue journal was especially challenging and beneficial. Of course, the benefit for the ESL students was the opportunity to communicate with a native English speaker in a non-intimidating environment.

One result of the project was that the TESOL students became aware of some of the grammatical patterns in the writing of nonnative English speakers. In informal discussions with each other, they began to comment on such things as the misuse or absence of articles ("I did live in the Florida;" "I have been in USA alone"), the lack of inflectional endings ("I fell so bad on Monday;" "I went to the firework downtown"), and problems with prepositions ("And I moved here at May 30, 1988). More significant, however, was that they began forming hypotheses about the sources of the errors — interference with the ESL students or overgeneralizations of English grammar rules (e.g., regularizing an irregular verb). The TESOL students were discovering predictable interlanguage; problems, an important aspect of teaching ESL.

Another result of the correspondence was that the TESOL students developed empathy and concern for the ESL students, particularly those who were refugees.

ESL Student: *I really miss my country and my lovely city [Saigon], but I can not go back there. That is so sad to me.*

TESOL Student: *I can tell that you are sad, but I think it is good to talk or write to others about your sadness.*

ESL Student: *I felt glad every time I read your letter ... This is the first time I wrote lots about myself to an American.*

One of the most interesting findings, one that warrants further research, is the discovery that certain kinds of journal entries written by the TESOL students seemed to elicit better responses from the ESL students. We have noticed that some ESL students' responses, like the one below, were short, with relatively simple syntax and vocabulary.

TESOL Student: *What country are you from? What are you studying at Memphis State? What do you like best about the United States?*

ESL Student: *I come from the Taiwan, Republic of China and I have been here for five months. My major is Accounting. This is my first time to come to the United States, so I feel everything in the USA attative me a lot."*

Others, like the one below, were longer, with more complex structures and a varied vocabulary.

TESOL Student: *What tropical fruits do you eat? I eat Kiwi fruit and mangoes, which are now in season and so we, or rather I, buy them at the fruit market.*

ESL Student: *Well, there are a lot of tropical fruits in our country, like durians, rambutans, mangos, bananas,* *etc. I like durian very much. Durian has a very strong smell. I think you should have heard about this fruit, don't you? Bananas is available throughout the year, but durian, rambutans and mangos is only available during its season. This season is in July and December.*

It appears that two factors were influencing the quality of the ESL students' writing. The first is topic and the second is the use of questions. When the interaction involved one participant asking the other questions about his or her personal life, the writing seemed superficial and simple, and topics were not developed over time. There seemed to be little motivation to write. However, when both commented (rather than simply asking questions) on more general topics (cultural points, holidays, plants, vegetables, foods), the motivation seemed higher and more writing was generated. We intend to investigate this observation more systematically in the future.

At the conclusion of the project the TESOL students hosted a reception in which they met their corresondents from the ESL class. Many exchanged addresses, and a follow-up revealed that some TESOL students had invited the ESL students to their homes to continue the cross-cultural exchange.

The original purpose of the dialogue project was deemed successful — communication and cultural sharing. At the same time, the findings, particularly those that suggest a difference in students' writing under different conditions, invite further analysis. §§

NOTES FROM THE FIELD

Reading Dialogue Journals: Billions of Benefits

Dorothy Taylor &
Maryam Koupaie
Baker Elementary School
Brookline, MA

A promising use of dialogue journals is to focus on course content. Dorothy Taylor and Maryam Koupaie, one of her 8th grade ESL students, sent these thoughts about dialogue journals that focus on texts the students have read.

What is a reading dialogue journal? It's a place where two or more people write down their thoughts about what they've been reading. A great many areas of thought are covered in my students' reading journals, including what they liked or didn't like about the author's style, theme, or characters, and why. Sometimes they write about why they selected a book or story since readings are self-selected, or they might recommend a book to me or someone else. I respond by sharing similar thoughts about what I've been reading and by asking questions to clarify and to stimulate their thinking. As we write back and forth, a dialogue is formed — a literary discussion of sorts, only on paper.

The students that I'm holding these literary discussions with are 4th through 8th grade ESL students whose language level is intermediate to advanced. They are required to read for 1/2 hour each night, and write in their journal twice a week. I also respond twice a week.

After we'd been doing them for awhile, I asked each of my students what they had

Published Articles about Dialogue Journals in Teacher Education

Most of these are cited in the articles in this issue. We have compiled them here for easy reference, and added those not mentioned elsewhere.

Bahruth, Robert & Howell, Amy. (1987). Helping student teachers and students with adverse attitudes. *Dialogue*, 4(2), 3

Irujo, Suzanne. (1987). Using dialogue journals in teacher training. *Dialogue*, 4(2), 11.

Roderick, Jessie A. (1986). Dialogue writing: Context for reflecting on self as teacher and researcher. *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision*, 1(4), 305-315.

Roderick, Jessie A., & Berman, Louise M. (1984). Dialoguing about dialogue journals. *Language Arts*, 61(7), 686-692.

learned from their reading dialogue journals. Some of their responses follow.

- *I think I've learned to see what I like from the authors — to see what I don't like — what kind of book I like reading the most and why I like it.* (Ruben Toquero, 7th grade)

- *You can read every day.* (Steven Tseng, 5th grade)

- *I learned how to describe the book.* (Punam Mannan, 8th grade)

- *How to put things down from my head and that has been hard for me to do.* (Jackson Tseng, 4th grade)

- *I learned spelling, names, or words.* (Omid Pakseresht, 8th grade)

Benefits of the reading journal have been many and varied. Maryam Koupaie, one of my 8th grade students, writes more fully about what she has gained from her reading journal.

"I believe there are many benefits to the reading journal. One of the things I find helpful about writing in the journal is that I pay more attention to what I'm reading. I need to understand the book better. What I mean is, I can't zoom through the book and finish it. For example, if I don't understand something in the book I can't just pass it because when I write in the reading journal and say that I didn't understand something the person's going to ask what I didn't understand. I'll have to read it again!! Once when I was reading a book, I realized that I didn't understand the ending. I wrote that in the reading journal and Ms. Taylor asked me what I didn't understand. I had to read that part over again, and what I noticed later on was that I had read too fast and that was the reason I hadn't understood that part.

"Another benefit of the reading journal is when people comment on my writing about the book, it's often helpful. In my case some of the questions asked help me with my writing too. For example, once a question was asked about the beginning of a book. Ms. Taylor asked me if I had ever started any of my stories like another author might have. Since I had never paid much attention to how an author starts their beginnings, I started paying more attention to them and I think paying attention to beginnings really taught me different ways to start my stories.

"A way to improve this reading journal would be to add another person to it. In that way you could hear a third person's comments or ideas."

In conclusion, the journal has helped us in many ways, and we hope it will help us even more in the future. §§

Dialogue **is the newsletter about the uses, benefits, and theory of dialogue journals and other forms of communicating in writing about topics of mutual interest through continuous, functional conversations between (usually) learners and teachers. This newsletter provides an informal means of sharing information, ideas and concerns among those who are using dialogue journals and other interactive writing and studying their uses in the United States and in other countries.**

It is an outgrowth of two National Institute of Education research grants to study dialogue journal writing with native and non-native English speakers. The newsletter is now produced with partial support from the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL). For information about dialogue journal research and practical applications write:

DIALOGUE, CAL
1118 22nd St., N.W.
Washington, DC 20037.

Dialogue appears approximately three times a year, at a cost of $10.00 a year. Back issues from 1982-1986 are available for $7.00; from 1987 on for $5.00. Make checks payable to Handbook Press.

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The world needs real dialogue. The only possible dialogue is the kind between people who remain what they are and speak their minds.
— Albert Camus

INTERACTIVE WRITING IN BILINGUAL EDUCATION

The goal of this issue is to document the special characteristics and uses of dialogue journal writing in bilingual contexts. Clearly, there are many similarities between dialogue journals in other contexts and those in bilingual or multilingual situations. The articles in this issue demonstrate an additional benefit with bilingual children and adults: they can develop literacy skills in both languages.

For developing the literacy skills of young bilingual children, the availability of two languages in the writing provides language options — topics may be written about in either language and literacy skills developed in both. Three authors describe case studies of children's literacy development in both the first and second languages, highlighting the positive effects of writing with a supportive, non-judgmental adult language partner.

Flores and Hernandez studied kindergarten and first grade children's acquisition of literacy and biliteracy skills. To the amazement of their teachers, the children developed competency in writing, implemented their knowledge of writing conventions, and over time, could communicate effectively in writing with their teachers.

García and García highlight the role of journal writing in validating students' language and sociocultural experiences. This validation forms the underpinnings of their acquisition of literacy skills. The teacher supports children's efforts in the native language and the second language (English) by providing a linguistic environment which builds on their experience, while nurturing native and second language development.

Flores, Rueda and Hidalgo describe a situation in which a learning disabled child learns how to write because his teacher organized experiences in her classroom that allowed the children to use language to construct meaning in social contexts.

Dialogue journals serve to promote improved communication among bilingual adults as effectively as they do with children. Dale Vigil wrote dialogue journals in Spanish with his staff, to share thoughts and school concerns. He found that the journals provided an added forum for the resolution of school problems and concerns and for the building of solidarity between an administrator and his staff.

George Blanco discusses the dialogue journals he used with teacher trainees to improve their Spanish language skills. He notes that his students' language skills did improve, along with their self-confidence in using Spanish.

Finally, Martha Dolly compares repair strategies in the dialogue journals of adult native English speakers learning Spanish with those of adult nonnative speakers learning English. She found that nonnative speakers employed a wider variety of repairs than the native speakers, who relied on the language they shared with the teacher to clarify misunderstandings. She suggests that writing to promote second language acquisition might be more effective if the partners do not share a native language.

As has been true in many discussions of dialogue journal writing, the development of language and literacy skills may be a compelling factor, but equally important seems to be the opportunity to share cultures and views. §§ — S.G.

A BILINGUAL KINDERGARTNER'S SOCIOPSYCHOGENESIS OF LITERACY AND BILITERACY

Barbara M. Flores, California State University, San Bernadino
Eddie Hernandez, Calexico, California

In 1985 Dool Elementary primary teachers in Calexico, California, began to transform their beliefs, theories, and practices related to emergent literacy and biliteracy. They had traditionally believed that kindergarteners and first graders could not and should not write until at least the month of January during their first grade. In kindergarten, the teachers only expected the children to learn how to write the alphabet and their names. First grade children were expected only to perfectly copy sentences from the blackboard. Bilingual children, especially those from very poor families, were not expected to do anything more than know the alphabet, their name, how to copy from the board, and how to decode syllabically in Spanish if that was their dominant language.

The teachers taught letter names and some phonics in kindergarten. Phonics were always taught in isolation, using worksheets and Basal readers. In first grade the children were grouped by reading ability. Bilingual teachers grouped their children into six groups: high, middle, and low in English and high, middle, and low in Spanish. Copying was considered writing. Not many bilingual children learned to read and write proficiently in spite of the teachers' dedication.

In 1985, the teachers began to shift their focus from a skill-based approach to a whole language approach. They had agreed, as part of their staff development efforts, to collaborate with us in action research, teaching and learning using the new praxis (theory-in-action and action-guided-by-theory) about literacy learning and teaching in two languages. We also agreed to a three-year commitment to monthly staff development that focussed on the critical pedagogy of coming to know.

Dialogue journal writing was the first social context that we organized for the teaching and learning of written language. The program we set up was based on an earlier study (Flores & García, 1984). On the first day of school, the children, the majority of whom were bilingual and from low socioeconomic families, were asked to draw and write in their journals on a daily basis. They were asked to write "their way." Many children said they could not write, but when we told them it was okay to pretend to write, to write their way, or to write like five and six year olds, they did. The teachers were absolutely incredulous because they had assumed that the children did not know anything about written language.

The following is a case study of one kindergartner's cognitive and linguistic evolution of knowledge about writing. Jesús comes from a bilingual family that speaks both Spanish and English. His acquisition of literacy in both languages is a living testimony that we cannot continue to underestimate the cognitive and linguistic potential of our language minority (soon to be majority) children.

His first journal entry (See Figure 1) demonstrates that Jesús had knowledge about left-to-right directionality, letter formation, linearity, and the arbitrariness of letter/symbols, and an adequate repetoire of letters.

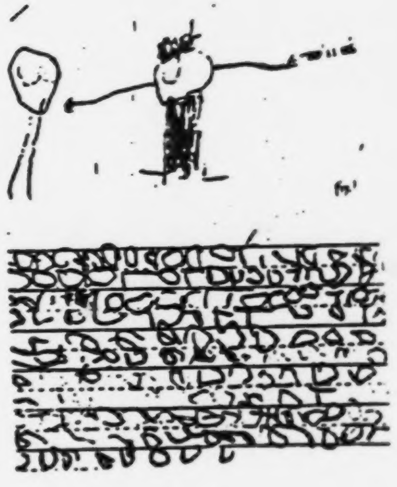

Figure 1.

His October entry (Figure 2) shows more sophisticated letter formations, refinement, and better control of the pencil. He was using a presyllabic conceptual interpretation (Ferreiro & Teberosky, 1982) of our alphabetic writing systems in Spanish and English. His teacher, Mr. Hernandez, genuinely responded to Jesus' rendition of having spiders at home. Even though Mr. Hernandez could not read what Jesus had written, he encouraged the children to write "their way." Each child orally read his message and therefore mediated meaning (Vygotsky, 1978) with an alternate sign system. Since the children could not read Mr. Hernandez' written message either, he also mediated his meaning by orally reading it as he wrote it with each child watching him as he wrote.

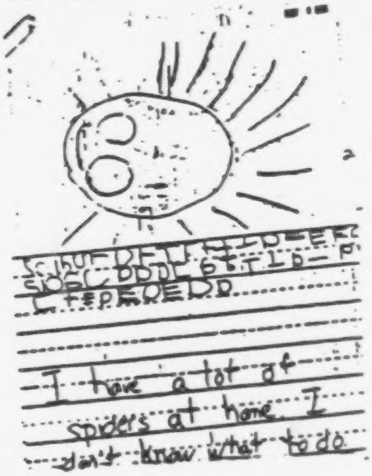
I have a lot of spiders at home. I don't know what to do

Figure 2.

Mr. Hernandez and the children were engaged in more than just dialogue journal writing. They were engaged in a meaningful exchange of personal and academic cultural knowledge. As Jesús wrote, he shared his evolving knowledge about written language. As his teacher wrote and mediated his writing, he shared the adult cultural expectation of written language in this particular context. He also demonstrated how all the cueing systems (pragmatic, semantic, syntactic, graphophonemic, and orthographic) (Goodman, 1982) are simultaneously used to represent meaning in writing. Finally, he deliberately organized a zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978) each time he wrote to Jesus.

By the end of the year Jesús was a balanced bilingual, writing alphabetically in both Spanish and English. His invented spellings, both in English and in Spanish, approximated our adult expectancy. In Spanish he wrote: *"LA CHAKA TBO I GATO"* (Chaka had one cat). His teacher responded authentically: *"Tu abuelita me dijo que la chaca estaba muy triste y no quería comer"* (Your grandma told me that Chaca was really sad and didn't want to eat.) (Figure 3).

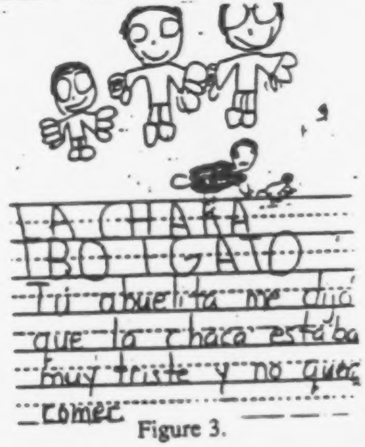
LA CHAKA TBO I GATO
Tu abuelita me dijo que la chaca estaba muy triste y no quer comer

Figure 3.

In English he wrote: *"AI HAV A WALE AV RABO."* (I have a wallet of Rambo.) His teacher responded authentically: *"Cesar has a wallet too. So do I, but it's not of Rambo."* (Figure 4).

From his teacher's daily transactions within the communicative context of dialogue journals, Jesus learned to read and write alphabetically in both Spanish and English. Both his teacher and parents were amazed. Yes, it is amazing what children can learn if we teachers know how to socially organize the learning and teaching. It is important for us to learn *more* about how children learn language, oral or written, first or second, so that we can not only organize, but deliberately facilitate, monitor, and document our children's sociopsychogenesis of literacy and biliteracy.

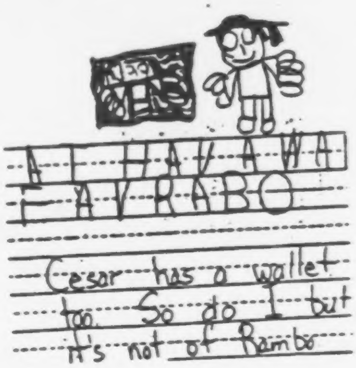
AI HAV A WALE AV RABO
Cesar has a wallet too. So do I but it's not of Rambo

Figure 4.

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JOURNALS IN SUPPORT OF BILITERACY

Eugene E. García, University of California, Santa Cruz
Erminda H. García, Pájaro Valley School District

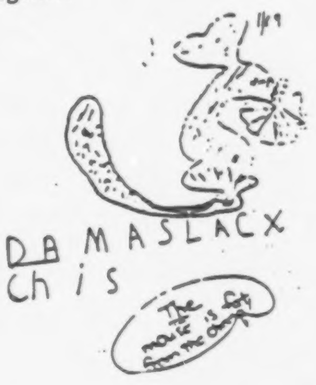
In recent years, the use of dialogue journal communication has served as an instructional technique to enhance biliteracy development in language minority students (Flores and García, 1984; Urzúa, 1987; García, 1988). Flores and García (1984) particularly emphasized the benefits of this form of student-teacher interaction in bilingual education classrooms, where students can use their native language to communicate. The journal provides another communicative context for the student and teacher, but the communication is primarily under the "control" of the student. Such written interaction has been reported as significant in the development of complex writing skills (Edelsky, 1986).

Researchers have also examined the development of written language in native Spanish speaking children enrolled in classrooms where first language literacy is emphasized prior to implementing an integrated Spanish/English curriculum (Hudelson, 1988). Findings from this research suggest that complex literacy skills acquired through journal interactions in the native language are directly related to the emergence of complex writing skills in English.

We believe that two factors are of particular importance in the development of writing skills: sociocultural variables in the commmunicative context and the type of written response produced by the teacher. The following brief discussion expands on these two points.

In an ongoing study by the authors, of writing in a first grade bilingual classroom, all of the children write daily in their dialogue journals about a self-selected topic. Most of the entries are written in the students' native language. These entries reflect experiences embedded in that native language and the corresponding sociocultural milieu. In essence, the students are invited to bring their background knowledge to the classroom and the teaching-learning enterprise. This approach directly acknowledges the significance of each student's experiences. Moreover, the journal context is supported by the understanding that meaning is being transacted between the student and the teacher. If entries are to be understood by the teacher, the child must use knowledge about a writing system, risk acceptance of his/her sociocultural experiences, and anticipate a mutual response from the teacher. In turn, the teacher models complex written expression, obtains information from the child, and anticipates a mutual response from the student. By supporting students in this enterprise, their language and sociocultural experiences are validated as the bond of teacher/child communication is built. The interactive journal process thus builds on the understanding that learning is enhanced when it occurs in contexts that are both socioculturally and linguistically meaningful to the learner.

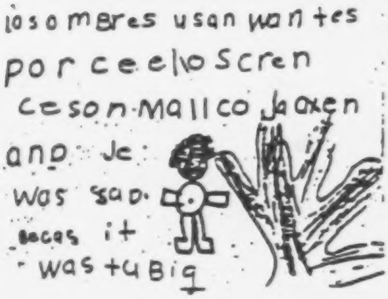
In an instructional context, interactive journals not only incorporate the students' prior sociocultural and language experiences but also nurture the acquisition of communicative competencies in English. Some of the children in this first grade bilingual classroom choose topics that they may have experienced in English and then write their entry in that language. In these entries the students demonstrate linguistic flexibility through knowledge gained from their own prior entries and responses modeled by the teacher. An example of this linguistic flexibility is demonstrated by Nellie who uses her knowledge of Spanish spelling and syntax to risk communicating her ideas about a mouse in English.


DB MASLACX
Ch i S
The mouse is fat from the che

("The mouse likes cheese.")

The types of responses provided by the teacher are highly significant. If the student's entry is in the native language, the teacher's native language response reaffirms the importance of native language use and development. If the student's entry is in English, the teacher's English response conveys a willingness by the teacher to pursue another communicative alternative.

Aside from the language of response, the quality of the teacher's response is also significant for native and second language literacy development. The teacher must ensure that his or her response is authentic while also engaging students in higher order linguistic and cognitive communication. Too often teachers' interactions with limited English speaking students are watered down to the teacher's limited expectations of these students' communicative abilities. We would recommend the opposite strategy: These students need to be challenged linguistically and cognitively in their second language. The journal context is the perfect place to encourage children not only to construct meaning in English but also to process a response that calls for higher order communicative and cognitive functioning. Delia, in the example which follows, demonstrates how she met this challenge when her teacher asked, *"Why do men wear gloves?"*:



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In summary, dialogue journals can play a key role in enhancing the biliteracy competence of linguistic minority students. They build on the child's own experiences, nurture native language development, and expand complex English competencies. However, this is only possible if the teacher is aware of the sociocultural relevance of this communication and of the role he or she can play in supporting the development of biliteracy through natural and challenging responses to student entries. Such recognition can make a dialogue journal a true communicative context that enhances biliteracy. §§

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EVERYONE BELONGS WHEN USING DIALOGUE JOURNALS: A STORY ABOUT LITERACY DEVELOPMENT

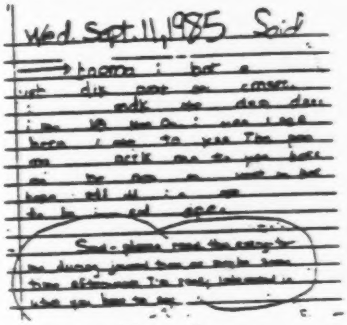
Barbara M. Flores, California State University, San Bernadino
Robert Rueda, University of Southern California
Gloria Hidalgo, Phoenix, Arizona

Said was a fourth grade student, but he was exceptional because he could not write. According to the Special Education teacher, he had a learning disability and needed direct instruction in discrete skills. However, his classroom teacher, Mrs. Hidalgo, had a different assessment of his "problem." Apparently in his four years of schooling, Said had not learned to read and write like his fourth grade counterparts, and he did not want any of his classmates to know it. Mrs. Hidalgo believed that all students could learn, and that the teacher should build on each child's strength. She also had knowledge and experience about how children learn written language, which she had garnered from various theoretical frameworks such as sociopsycholinguistics (Goodman, 1970, 1982; Halliday, 1978; Smith, 1971), sociocultural perspectives (Vygotsky, 1962; Diaz, Moll & Mehan, 1984), psychogenetics (Ferreiro & Teberosky, 1982; Flores, Amabisca, & Castro, in press), and critical pedagogy (Freire & Macedo, 1987; Shor & Freire, 1987).

She deliberately organized the learning and teaching contexts in her whole language bilingual classroom so that the children could genuinely engage in the social construction of knowledge (Vygotsky, 1962) by using language as their tool. She did not group them by reading/writing ability. Instead, she organized the learning/teaching situations so that all children participated and had equal opportunities to engage in meaningful and critical dialogue (Freire, 1970). Dialogue journal writing represented just one of these opportunities.

Said participated, reluctantly at first, but gradually came to understand the purpose of dialogue journals as a place to share ideas, fears, dreams, and thoughts, and as a place to learn. His first entry (see Figure 1) did not bother his teacher because she knew that this was his way of representing meaning. However, she also knew that she could not read his writing nor he hers. So they mediated (Vygotsky, 1978) each other's writing by reading it aloud. Mrs. Hidalgo knew that Said's conceptual interpretation of the alphabetic writing system was still at a presyllabic level (Ferreiro & Teberosky, 1982). With daily transactions, she would be demonstrating the alphabetic and conventional use of writing, and Said would eventually learn to write English conventionally so everyone could understand it. Patience and the belief that Said's cognitive development would progress allowed Mrs. Hidalgo and Said the chance to continue their written communications on a daily basis.

The following journal entries tell the story of Said's literacy development. His first entry (Figure 1) demonstrates that he had knowledge of letters and conventions such as segmentation and punctuation, but his message could not be understood unless it was read aloud. Mrs. Hidalgo did not demean his attempt to communicate, but instead requested that he orally read his entry because she was "really interested in what he had to say." Said's attempt was valued and his knowledge about written language was accepted.



Wed. Sept. 11, 1985 Said

Figure 1.

For three and one half months, Said's entries looked like his first one in September. Not until January, 1986 did his writing become more alphabetic. He wrote:

> *I like Mr. hansen he was happy with us we all intoed (enjoyed) hime I hope so he will be back one of this days I no he will I hat tadol tails (tattletales) do you if we tel on my sister if she do someing My mom will hit us.*

He had come a long way since September. He was using an alphabetic writing system that could be understood, and he had begun to write freely about his concerns and opinions and to share cultural knowledge with his teacher. His working understanding of written language was accepted, and he had learned that he could use writing to share experiences.

Cultural knowledge is coshared, co-created, and colearned. Freire (1970) says that a learner is empowered when he/she realizes that knowledge can be re-created and co-created with another person. Said learned to read and write because his teacher organized the learning and teaching so that he belonged; his cultural knowledge was valued; they mutually mediated each others' written meaning with oral language; and his literacy development in his second language was always a shared goal.

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Great Moments in Journal History

Larson
DIARY 2/4
DIARY 2/5
DIARY 2/10
Oo
Oongowa
Oongowa
Oongowa

Tarzan contemplates another entry.

The WRITE Administrative Style

Dale W. Vigil
Denver Public Schools

In the Denver Public Schools, one of our main goals is that all students, especially the limited English proficient students, will join the "literacy club." We would also like to see all participating Anglo, Black and Hispanic pupils in bilingual education join the "biliteracy club."

One way of preparing our students to attain this goal is to ensure that they have ample opportunities to communicate in two languages. One strategy that has proven to be effective has been dialogue journal writing. Students learn to read and write by reading and writing in a natural and meaningful interaction, expressing their ideas, thoughts, and feelings in an open-ended fashion with their teachers.

Dialogue journals also have had a place in public education outside of the classroom. In the Denver Public School's Department of Bilingual/ESOL Education, I have used them in two ways. Both ways have allowed me to communicate more effectively as an administrator.

The first way dialogue journals have helped me has been with management. Last year I needed to communicate individually with eleven colleagues in the department. A number of them were housed in another building and those that shared an office complex with me were often out in the schools, interacting with teachers, students and principals. Time constraints on our staff meetings did not permit us to communicate in detail on certain issues or events. After I began dialogue journals with these colleagues, two things became apparent. First, we were able to share information regarding our activities. Details could be elaborated without the fear of taking up too much time at staff meetings. At times, closure on certain issues required several entries. That was fine with me because we were able to support each other on actions that dealt with improvement of instruction or areas which needed clarification. We sometimes shared personal feelings, which allowed us to understand and support each other in many situations.

Second, some of the staff and I had the opportunity to refine our writing skills in Spanish. I asked my colleagues who were bilingual in English and Spanish if they would be comfortable with me writing to them in Spanish only. All of them agreed, and chose to respond to me in Spanish as well. It gave us a natural context in which to fine tune our Spanish literacy skills. We communicate orally in Spanish very often and stay quite proficient. However, writing opportunities come less frequently.

The second way that dialogue journals have helped me as an administrator has been in understanding how this process works in the classroom with students. I decided to write a dialogue journal with a bilingual sixth grade elementary school student. She had received her instruction exclusively in English, even though she came from a Spanish speaking home. When I met "Elvia," her oral skills in English and Spanish were quite good, but she had not yet acquired Spanish literacy skills. After establishing rapport with her, I asked Elvia (in Spanish) if she would mind interacting entirely in Spanish in our journal, and she was very cordial in accepting this request. She was comfortable with the activity, but expressed concern that she had never written in Spanish before. I assured her that I was not interested in her spelling but rather in her ideas, thoughts and feelings about what she did every day.

In the four months that we had our dialogue journal, I observed four things: 1) It was clear to me that Elvia was comfortable using Spanish in the journal. 2) Her spelling improved as she wrote her own and read my entries. My modeling appeared to help her see how certain words were spelled. 3) Throughout her journal entries, Elvia did minimal code switching into English. 4) Most of her writing employed Spanish syntax.

My experiences with Elvia and with my colleagues have been beneficial. I was able to lower my own anxiety about the sharing of information with colleagues, and I experienced how teachers can use dialogue journals to encourage literacy.

This year I plan to use a dialogue journal with another student to see what else I can learn from him/her through our writing. I can't wait. §§

SPANISH FOR BILINGUAL EDUCATION TEACHERS: THE ROLE OF DIALOGUE JOURNALS

George M. Blanco
The University of Texas at Austin

Using dialogue journals in my teaching has been late in coming. Now I use them with a vengeance! I had read about their use and had heard speakers at conferences provide detailed descriptions about journals, but dismissed them as too gimmicky for my purposes, and did not take them seriously until I began working on a project on the teaching of Spanish to the native Spanish speaker. This project was initiated by the Texas Education Agency (Texas State Department of Education), and funded by Title II, Education for Economic Security Act. The general purpose of the project was to upgrade the state program on teaching Spanish to native speakers at the secondary school level. Part of the project was the development of a state curriculum guide, *Español para el hispanohablante: Función y noción.* *

This guide was pilot tested by secondary school Spanish teachers principally in the San Antonio area, and by its three other authors. It was not until the guide was published, however, that I had the opportunity to implement in my own teaching some of the instructional strategies it recommended, including dialogue journals. The section entitled "El diario interactivo" was written by Robert Bahruth, a doctoral student in bilingual education at The University of Texas at Austin. According to Bahruth, dialogue journal writing builds on students' prior knowledge and writing skills in English. It is not necessary to postpone dialogue journal writing until the class has been introduced to all of the writing conventions and grammatical rules of the Spanish language, because students can transfer their existing literacy skills in English to Spanish.

As a result of this introduction, I began to use dialogue journals in my own classes. My approach was in keeping with my philosophy for engaging future bilingual education teachers in Spanish language expansion. The purpose of my course, Spanish for Bilingual Teachers, is to:

- Provide students with opportunities to learn and apply to teaching situations the technical language necessary to teach in such areas as social studies, science, arithmetic, etc.
- Develop in the students confidence in using instructional materials written in Spanish.
- Help the students learn to express themselves orally and in writing on topics common to the elementary classroom.

Dialogue journals have become central to this course. Since one of my main goals is to instill in students confidence in the use of oral and written Spanish, I feel it is important to provide them with many opportunities to express themselves orally and in writing and to ensure that these opportunities emphasize the message rather than the form of communication.

It is unfortunate that many of my native Spanish speaking students have had poor experiences in their high school and university Spanish courses. In many of these courses, there is a preoccupation with correction of spelling, grammar and vocabulary, so these students have developed a fear of expressing themselves in Spanish. They have also developed the erroneous notion that they do not know as much Spanish as they thought prior to enrolling in the Spanish course.

The idea of being able to commit their thoughts to writing without the fear of my correcting them has been refreshing and even mind-boggling to the students. Not until the first or second time that I return their journals do some of them really believe that I am not going to take my red pen to what they have written.

When I began using dialogue journals, I wrote my responses in longhand. This proved too time consuming, and some students had difficulty deciphering my handwriting. I now use a microcomputer for all my responses to their handwritten entries. This has been both a time-saver for me and a bonus for the students, because they find it much easier to read printed rather than handwritten entries Each week I respond to all the journals. I identify each entry with the individual student's name and date. I print all the responses on one continuous sheet, which I then cut and tape to the individual journals.

The following selections from actual dialogue journals show the nature of my responses and the way that I attempt to model correct spelling, grammar, and vocabulary. The sentences in italics represent the student entries and those in regular print are my responses.

Spelling

La música me facina. Yo cantaba en el coro de la escuela .

A mí también me fascina la música, pero no toco ningún instrumento.

E usado la bicicleta de ejercicio, pero no es lo mismo.

Pues, yo no he participado en ese tipo de concurso o carrera, porque . . .

Grammar

Durante la programa, dos señores tocaron la guitarra.

¿De qué clase de música tocaron en el programa?

Llevamos a los niños al parque y se divertieron mucho . . .

Seguramente, los niños se divirtieron, ya que no estaban en la escuela.

El director de la escuela no quiere que salimos antes de las cuatro.

Por buena suerte, aquí en la universidad no les importa que salgamos antes de ciertas horas, con tal de que no faltemos a las clases.

Vocabulary

El nos invitó a un show esa noche y nos divertimos mucho.

¿De qué tipo de espectáculo fue?

Esta semana, tuve conference con mi principal, porque . . .

Las conferencias con el director a veces son difíciles .

My purpose in underlining is to call attention to certain items. I do not, nor cannot possibly, address all of the students' mistakes in my responses. I simply select those that either recur frequently or that I feel are especially critical. Since I strive to make my responses as natural as possible, there are occasions when I would like to call the student's attention to a particular construction or word, but I cannot do so without making my response seem contrived. If I feel that the item is sufficiently significant or that other members of the class will profit from my talking about it, I spend a few minutes of class time addressing the issue without identifying the student who had the problem.

In the course evaluations for Spring 1988, the dialogue journals were a frequent source of comment. The students expressed considerable appreciation for this activity. Although some were far from writing with complete accuracy, their attitude toward Spanish had changed noticeably, and they mentioned that they no longer feared writing in Spanish. Although their writing skills in English were still superior to those in Spanish, at least they learned that there was nothing wrong with consulting a dictionary for help in spelling words and in identifying synonyms, etc. At the beginning of the course, there were some who would rather have taken a chance on writing a word wrong than admit that they were unsure of its spelling.

I feel the use of dialogue journals has helped my students to express themselves more confidently and accurately. As future bilingual education teachers, they have developed a positive attitude which will encourage them to continue to perfect their literacy skills in Spanish. §§

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*Blanco, G. M., et al. *Español para el hispanohablante funcion y nocion*. Austin, TX: Texas Education Agency Publication No. 56690502.

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NEGOTIATION OF MEANING IN WRITING: THE L1 FACTOR

Martha R. Dolly
Frostburg State University

One key factor influencing the nature of dialogue journal interaction in second language settings is whether or not partners share their first language. Students in bilingual programs in the U.S. may or may not be taught by someone fluent in their native language, whereas foreign language students and their teachers nearly always share fluency in English. My experience with American foreign language and ESL students suggests that dialogue journal interactions of partners who do not have a common L1 differ greatly from that of partners who do. I would argue that interations between those who don't share an L1 may be more effective for promoting language acquisition, because of the greater amount of language "repair" or "negotiation of meaning" that occurs.

Michael Long's (1983a,b) extensive research of oral conversation between native and nonnative speakers indicates that negotiation of meaning (modifying conversational structure to prevent or resolve communication breakdowns) is essential to second language (L2) acquisition. In dialogue journal writing, as in oral interaction, the negotiation of meaning may be initiated by either partner and is accomplished through various repair tactics, including confirmation requests, comprehension checks, and clarification requests. Repairs modify the structure of the conversation, forcing the nonnative speaker to grapple with understanding his interlocutor or making himself understood in the L2 in order to prevent communication breakdowns.

Resolving communication problems in dialogue writing may be less difficult than in oral conversation because a confused writer has time to ponder the partner's meaning. Still, my ESL students and I negotiated meaning quite frequently. For example, I was afraid I had not fully understood Hung Hwa's "agony" regarding the marriage her mother wanted to arrange for her and so initiated a confirmation request: *"Let me summarize what you told me, and if I've misunderstood something, maybe you can explain it to me."* Hung Hwa confirmed my summary in her next entry: *"I think you have understood everything very well."*

A related strategy, the comprehension check, allows the speaker/writer to verify that his message is being understood. Esteban frequently used checks such as *"I don't know if you can understand me. I know that I am not very clear."*

The third meaning-negotiation strategy, the clarification request, asks the partner for elaboration. Rajiv explained to me that a statement I had not understood was an Urdu idiom meaning "before the things go out of your control."

In all three cases, these students ultimately succeeded in communicating with a partner who could not comprehend them unless they could make themselves understood in the target language.

Students who share a first language with the teacher but are communicating in the second language may find the conversation less challenging, and may therefore take fewer opportunities to negotiate meaning. Both partners are aware that their conversation is somewhat artificial, that their ideas could be more quickly and clearly communicated in their L1. Though shared culture and language help clarify meaning (I was usually able to understand my American students regardless of how garbled their Spanish was), participants sometimes simply resort to their L1 to clear up problems. I confess that I sometimes provide my American students with parenthetical explanations of my writing in English.

The most common student tactic is to insert a word or phrase from English in their Spanish ("Favor de decirme lo que Ud. meant by 'Kaypro'"). A riskier but still successful strategy is to translate an idiom literally, as did a student who wrote of a sister who had greatly improved her gymnastics skill, "Mi hermana ha venido una larga distancia" (My sister has come a long distance). As a native speaker of English, I recognized this as an American idiom in Spanish dress and easily made sense of it, but a native speaker of Spanish might have had to initiate repair.

The gap between artificial and authentic communication is further illustrated by my students who volunteered to verbalize and tape record "whatever goes through your mind" while writing their entries. The Americans supplemented and clarified their Spanish texts with commentary in English ("*I meant here that I had spring fever. I didn't know exactly how to say it, so I thought this was a pretty creative way just to make it up*"). They sensed a need to negotiate meaning, but avoided using the L2 exclusively. ESL students, in contrast, made only a few brief extra-textual comments, always in the L2 ("With this short report I shall close for today"). All negotiation of meaning was carried out in their texts.

If we accept Long's conclusion that the negotiation of meaning is critical to language acquisition, we may want to encourage all L2 dialogue journal writers to work through communication problems in the L2 rather than allowing major problems to pass unresolved or relying on L1 shortcuts. Successful oral communication is a complex task for nonnative speakers, and refining negotiation strategies through dialogue journal discourse may ultimately help them manage their oral interactions more skillfully also. §§

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Related Research on Bilingual Education

Editor's Note: As a number of articles in this issue point out, one use of dialogue journals may be to develop/maintain first language literacy. The following research supports the importance of first language literacy for school success.

A recent study of 2,000 limited English speaking students in Fairfax County, Virginia, concluded that certain groups of children might acquire English for academic purposes more rapidly if they received at least two years of instruction in their native tongue. The students were those who entered American schools with grade-level skills but no exposure to English prior to schooling here.

The study found clear differences in the ease with which pupils learned English, and were therefore on grade level in English on standardized tests in reading and other subjects. Children who began school in Fairfax at ages 507 scored poorly in all subjects four years later, compared with those who started school and an ESL program at ages 8-11. By the sixth grade, these older arivals were outperforming younger arrivals who had been in the United States two to three years longer. "The only known variable that differentiated" these two groups was the lack of schooling in their mother tongue for the younger-age students.

The stuudy noted that these findings are consistent with Jim Cummins' hypothesis that at least two years of literacy development in the first language is the necessary "threshhold" for the transfer of literacy and other cognitive skills to the second language. The 8 to 11 year olds were quicker to achieve cognitive proficiency because they had gotten a head start in their native language. The cognitive base in first language seems to help them significantly with their second-language schooling.

This six-year study, "Acquisition of Cognitive—Academic Second Language Proficiency," conducted by Virginia Collier and Wayne Thomas of George Mason University, Fairfax, Virginia, was begun in 1981 and released in 1988.

Notes from the Field....

"When other teachers learn what I'm doing I usually encounter shock and horror."

I have been using dialogue journals for several weeks now, and I know I will never teach without them again. I learn things about my students that I never could otherwise, and vice versa.

The hour I spend with the journals is one of the best parts of my day. They are especially useful with sixth graders, as they give me vital information that I need to make their learning experiences relevant to their daily lives. They tell me how they play outside, the significant role their pets play in their lives, and all about their toys. For some of my students I am the only, or one of few, adults who take any time to treat them as equals, to converse with them, and respond to their ideas as valuable.

Everything involving the journals and the students has been wonderful. However, what is both interesting and perplexing is the reaction of other teachers. Usually I encounter shock and horror. They cannot believe a) that I "waste" so much time on such a project, and b) that I think my students are important or interesting enough to write to everyday. Some teachers act as though I am super-human or amazing for using the journals. When I tell them teachers all over the country are doing this, most don't believe me.

I do not think I am a fool or an amazing person. I get back everything I put into the journals, ten times over. My question is: Am I in a particularly negative building? Are these typical reactions? *Not one teacher* has ever said, "Maybe I will try that," even in a modified way. No one wants to learn more about the value or benefits. Don't teachers typically turn to each other to learn about our art? All teachers work hard; why does the perception that I am working hard shock my fellow teachers? This is the oddest thing I have encountered involving my use of dialogue journals. Any feedback would be most welcome. What do you think?

Several weeks later Chrisanne sent this success story.

"The special education teacher I work with has suddenly come out with some highly positive and interested comments about dialogue journals. She has observed first hand some of the values, and we have discussed them. She hasn't said anything yet about starting them herself, but...."

Chrisanne LaHue-Johnson
109 West Cannon St.
Lafayette, CO 80026

NEXT ISSUES

INTERACTIVE WRITING IN EARLY ELEMENTARY EDUCATION (SPRING 1989)

Researchers have recently made tremendous gains in understanding the processes and development of beginning writers, but there is a great deal more to be learned. In this issue, we seek articles focusing especially on this population, and we hope that the students studied will include native English speakers, students learning English as a second language or some foreign language, "special students" (learning disabled, gifted and talented, etc.), and students at very beginning stages of literacy development. Issues addressed might include things like the following.

- How to begin a program of interactive writing with these students
- What special factors must be taken into consideration with this population
- What early writing patterns look like
- What patterns of development occur over a given period of time (like a year)
- What role technology might play in interactive writing with beginning readers and writers
- In what content areas (math, science, foreign language, etc.) dialogue journals might be used

Please send articles of 2 to 3 double spaced pages to Joy Peyton at CAL by March 15, 1989.

INTERACTIVE WRITING IN CONTENT AREAS (FALL 1989)

In the past couple of years, one of the central concerns of teachers and researchers has been the integration of reading and writing with academic content areas. In this issue, we will focus on the role of interactive writing for exploring, reflecting on, and learning content. We welcome articles giving a rationale for using interactive writing in content courses, describing specific programs or approaches, or summarizing research. Areas of interest might include science, math, social studies, literature, or foreign languages, at all ages and grade levels.

Please send articles of 2 to 3 double spaced typed pages, or notes of any length, to Joy Peyton at CAL by July 15, 1989.

If you type your article using MacWrite, Ready-Set-Go, or Microsoft Word, you can send your articles on 3.25" floppy disks. Please send along a hard copy also. Thanks!

NEW ARTICLES ABOUT DIALOGUE JOURNALS

"We Cannot Effectively Teach Children We Do Not Know"

EDITOR'S NOTE: *This excerpt from James Britton's chapter in a forthcoming book edited by Anne Haas Dyson,* Writing and Reading: Collaboration in the Classroom, *provides a helpful and welcome discussion of dialogue journal use as written conversation. We are particularly pleased that Britton describes a teacher using a dialogue-like journal in a classroom in Ontario in 1978, just about the time our own research with Leslee Reed was beginning, further evidence that dialogue journals are truly a teacher-developed practice, aided but not created by research.*

CONVERSATIONS ON PAPER

When teaching and learning are seen as genuinely interactive behaviors we discover that we cannot effectively teach *children we don't know*. Getting to know the children in a new group, say at the beginning of a new year, is therefore a first priority. Of course, teachers and children get to know each other primarily in face-to-face situations and the talk these promote or permit. But days are short and classes may be large — and there is no doubt that written exchange conducted in the right way can greatly assist us in getting to know the children we teach. Moreover — something we cannot underestimate — writing to this end is, for both child and teacher, writing-and-reading to a genuine social purpose.

The journal as "written conversation" between child and teacher was something I first appreciated in 1978 in Dundas School, Toronto . . . A Grade 3/Grade 4 class at Dundas in 1978 was taught by Mrs. Irwin, and one of the things the children did for her was to keep a journal, which she would read and write in as she moved around in the classroom. It was clear that journal entries were made only when you had something to say to Mrs. Irwin — and that made them interesting to read. ... I quote one or two of the entries made by Linda, a Chinese 9-year-old (the teacher's comments are shown in italics).

Friday January 20th 1978. After my rough copy of my project I am going to rearange my project around. I am going to put growing up first page. What monkeys do to eat in second page. Why do monkeys make faces page three. *Sounds interesting.*

Wednesday Jan 25. It was interesting. Did you think it is very interesting or interesting or just a little interesting? Mrs. I., I'm sorry your husband wouldn't let you have another dog but anyways someone already took the dog. How's Malcom? I hope he isn't sick or anything. *Malcolm is fine thank you — he cries when I leave in the morning and gets very excited when I come home! ...*

Tuesday Feb 14th. The last time I wrote I told you that I was school sick and you asked me why. Well now I will tell you why, because I like to learn, I also like you, I like to do work and when I was away I miss the class. Today I am glad to be here because I wouldn't like to miss the Val- entine party. Mrs. I. can you give me a few suggests for the party. What I mean is to give me a few suggests what to bring for the party. *(1) a sharp knife to cut apples (2) serviettes (3) little bags to take goodies home in.*

* * * * * * *

As pedagogues I think we too easily lose sight of the realistic judgment that writing that does what we meant it to do must be good writing! Linda, like others in her class, enjoyed writing her journal because it made her feel good about the way "Mrs. I." felt about her. I talked to Linda about her journal and she said, "Yes, we kinda communicate."

I think at this early stage in a writer/reader's progress the journal serves the purpose of establishing and maintaining relations between pupil and teacher. At later stages we shall demand a double purpose for the journal (as I have done in my courses for adults) and use it both to further interpersonal relationships and to encourage relaxed exploration of the material of the course in the context of the writer's own experience. For either purpose, the teacher's response — even where it may be brief — is responsible for maintaining the tone, and thereby the purpose, of the exchange.

A movement to promote such uses of the journal has come in recent years from the Center for Applied Linguistics in Washington. The journal, in essentially the terms in which I have described it above, has been christened the "Dialogue Journal." Stress has rightly been put on the importance of teacher and pupil *thinking together* in the written exchanges of the journal. ... [*Taken from Technical Report No. 8, "Writing and Reading in the Classroom," James Britton, August 1987. Center for the Study of Writing.*]

Dialogue is the newsletter about the uses, benefits, and theory of dialogue journals and other forms of communicating in writing about topics of mutual interest through continuous, functional conversations between (usually) learners and teachers. This newsletter provides an informal means of sharing information, ideas and concerns among those who are using dialogue journals and other interactive writing and studying their uses in the United States and in other countries. It is an outgrowth of two National Institute of Education research grants to study dialogue journal writing with native and non-native English speakers. The newsletter is now produced with partial support from the Center for Language Education and Research (CLEAR), which is funded by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement of the Department of Education. For information about dialogue journal research and practical applications or the work of CLEAR, write:

DIALOGUE, CAL
1118 22nd St., N.W. Washington, DC 20037.

Dialogue appears approximately three times a year, at a cost of $10.00 to cover duplication and mailing. Back issues from 1982-1986 are available for $7.00; from 1987 on for $5.00. Make checks payable to Handbook Press.

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The world needs real dialogue. The only possible
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speak their minds.
— Albert Camus

The Newsletter about Dialogue Journals
Vol. VI No. 1, April 1989

INTERACTIVE WRITING IN ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

Donald Graves has said that "Children want to write. They want to write the first day they attend school" (1983, *Writing: Teachers and children at work*, p. 3). It is humbling to think that this has come as a revelation to many of us. We thought we had to *teach* children to *want to write* and *how to write*. But as we have discovered and created new opportunities for children to write to communicate and have let them teach us, we have been continually amazed at how much and how early they can and want to write when we *don't* "teach" them. In fact, learning about children *and ourselves* as we have watched them write and written with them has been one of the most eye-opening and exciting things that some of us have experienced in the past few years. This sense of discovery and excitement as teachers and researchers watch and write with children, described explicitly in Judith Lindfors' opening article, pervades all of the articles in this issue.

The focus of the issue, a logical and noble one, was to be elementary-level students' learning. It turns out instead to be about teachers', parents', and researchers' learning as they have watched, written with, and written about students. In looking over her questions in dialogue journal interactions, Lindfors discovered that she and other teachers have a tremendous desire to learn about their students' worlds, a desire that is often buried under the effort of "teaching." But there is tremendous value in taking the opportunity in the privacy of written interaction to learn about the "stuff" of students' lives. Hall and his colleagues were surprised to learn that very young children actually wanted to and could sustain a longterm written dialogue (they are *still* writing with those students, at the students' initiation, long after the planned end of their project). Wilson shared a rich relationship in writing with a second grader who simply had not communicated with her orally for a couple of years. The parents and teachers that McNamee worked with learned together about their children, as they observed them and wrote together about them. Dillard and her collaborating teachers learned *from their first graders* how to use "lit logs" successfully, and Bintz, a researcher working with them, learned some valuable things about how to study interactive writing, an issue that has not been easy for any of us. Now that she has learned what older elementary deaf and hard of hearing students can do in written interaction, Lieberth is ready to work with younger, beginning writers, a new frontier in deaf education.

Teaching can be very hard work, and has become discouraging in various ways for many of us. But most of us are teachers, or researchers, because we have always loved to learn. If we can truly become learners again, learning from our students and allowing them to *see* us learning, we can recapture and maintain the energy and excitement that led us into the classroom in the first place. §

—JKP

THE TEACHER AS LEARNER IN DIALOGUE JOURNAL WRITING

Judith Wells Lindfors
The University of Texas at Austin

I am intrigued with the opportunities that interactive writing offers for elementary students to come to know their teacher in the role of learner. Teachers tend to pay lip service to the importance of teacher-as-learner, yet in the classrooms I visit, I rarely see teachers who are — in the ongoing classroom context, out in the open where students can see — LEARNERS, people actually engaging in increasing their knowledge or skills. Though learning is supposedly what schooling is about, learning is the one activity our students rarely see us carry out. And so it is interesting, perhaps, to reflect on an ongoing classroom event in which we teachers are learners — not just pretend, but for real — and our students are our teachers.

After doing daily dialogue journal writing for a month with a group of Zulu sixth graders in South Africa, I analyzed the writing in 25 of the journals (761 entries). These students ranged in age from 12 to 16, and had had English as their medium of instruction for approximately three years. One aspect of the writing that I analyzed was the students' questioning — their information-seeking (not necessarily in interrogative form). But as I did so, I began to be aware of my own questioning in the journals. I was stunned to discover that, out of the 701 questions that I had asked, there was not a single instance of the "teacher question;" i.e., the known-answer question.

At first I thought, "Well, of course. I was an outsider to the culture these students were from, so naturally I would ask them about aspects of their culture that were unfamiliar to me." And indeed, some of my questions were culturally-related:

What do children play here in South Africa? Do little boys and girls play with different kinds of toys? Do many women in your country choose this career [social work]? Would you explain the grading system you have here? [In your country] does a woman take her husband's surname when she marries? At what age do girls in your country get married? I don't know anything about Stimela at all. How many are in the group? What kind of music do they play and sing? Does everyone have to learn Afrikaans in your school? What do the teachers here do to help the pupils learn? Why do you call your garden "jabula" garden? What does "jabula" mean?

But a close examination revealed that most of my questions were not culture-specific. The vast majority asked about the "stuff" that daily life is made of in any culture: about families and friends; about movies, books, magazines, TV programs; about playing sports, going to parties, taking trips, being ill, going shopping, celebrating holidays, participating in competitions, preparing food, going to church....

My graduate and undergraduate students at the University of Texas find that as they participate in interactive writing with elementary school students as part of their student teaching or to collect data for research projects, they too ask their students genuine questions, questions that they really want to know the answers to. In these inter- actions, they become active learners and their students become their teachers.

I have read many articles about the importance of teacher questioning. These articles tell me how teachers "should" question in order to enhance students' learning: "The teacher should ask higher level cognitive questions;" "The teacher should ask open-ended questions;" "The teacher should balance her questions and the students', asking approximately the same number of questions that the students ask." But few people mention that it might be valuable for the teacher to ask *real* questions, *sincere* questions:

— Valuable, I think, for ourselves, the adult partners, so that we may better understand the "stuff" our students' daily lives are made of (the "stuff" of our teaching when we are at our best);

— And valuable for our students, so that they may watch us actively engage in the very learning processes we are so quick to say we value. Interactive writing offers rich opportunities for us to be sincere questioners and thus real learners. §§

LETTER WRITING WITH YOUNG CHILDREN

Nigel Hall & Anne Robinson
Manchester Polytechnic, England
and
Leslie Crawford
Moorhead State University, Minnesota

Although dialogue journal writing seems to have captured the educational headlines, written dialogue is not to be found only in dialogue journals. Indeed, dialogue journals appear to be a relatively recent phenomenon in education; letter-writing has a much greater provenance. However, there have been very few studies of young children's letter-writing, and most of those concern what might be called "one-off" letters, that don't continue as a regular dialogue.

Two years ago, the three of us decided to see whether very young children could handle the problems of sustaining an ongoing letter-writing dialogue with adults whom they did not know. Anne was teaching a class of five and a half year old children, Nigel was a lecturer working in teacher education, and Les was an American visiting professor working with Nigel. We decided that Les and Nigel would write, on an individual basis, to the children in Anne's class.

Our first task was to decide how to get started with this group of children who were, to Les and Nigel, totally unknown. In an attempt to clarify what the quality of these exchanges was going to be, we identified three important properties of written dialogue, and determined that they would govern all of our correspondence.

1. It was only significant if it extended over time. We were not interested in "one-off" letters. Such letters are, of course, important but we felt that real exploration with written language between correspondents had to develop across real time. Participants had to have the chance to get to know each other, to develop a style of exchange, and to understand the different obligations of sustained communication.

2. The dialogue had to be an authentic one between two friendly people with equal rights. Although as mature writers Les and Nigel clearly had competencies much greater than those of the children, this did not entitle them to use that competence in a didactic way. It was not their function to control the dialogue.

3. As the dialogue was between two people acting in friendship, it was the meanings which were to be significant rather than the form of those meanings. Friends do not normally correct, mark, or grade each other's letters. They write because they have important or interesting things to say to each other; they want to know about each other's lives. Each accepts the other's letters as they are. Friends do not seek to embarrass or humiliate each other.

To get started, Les and Nigel visited Anne's class and tried to simply have fun with the children, working and playing with them during the day. At one point during the day, each of the children received a letter either from Nigel or Les. The letter invited the child to write back.

The visit had been a success in terms of the immediate objectives. But once Nigel and Les had left the classroom would the enthusiasm continue? Would the children actually write any letters? We had agreed that there was to be no compulsion to take part; no one had to reply if they did not want to. Anne was prepared to remind the children if necessary, but no pressure was to be put on them to respond. As it turned out, encouragement was not needed. Every single one of the children wanted to write and none of them asked for ideas or information. The completed letters were bundled up and sent to Les and Nigel.

The three of us had decided that there should be very few concessions to the children's age or experience. Les and Nigel would try to write neatly but would use, as far as possible, the expressions and language that they would use with adult correspondents. We decided that the letters should be kept relatively short at first, but that the length would subsequently be a function of each individual exchange.

Within two weeks all the children had written to either Les or Nigel, and (cont. p. 4)

within another week they all received individual replies. The letter writing exchange had well and truly begun. If we are honest, though, none of us expected it to continue for very long. We were well aware of the volatility in young children's interests, and the exchange was not a compulsory activity. Would it last a few weeks, a few months, a year...? Two years later we are still wondering! An interview with the children after two years revealed that they still enjoy writing and receiving the letters, and that they want to continue and have no particular end in sight. Les and Nigel now anticipate writing for many years to come.

Changes have inevitably taken place during the project. Some children have left the school. Some reorganization of classes has led to a very small number of children stopping writing. And, after six months, Les returned to the United States and had to continue his correspondence long distance. Although these changes have necessitated some "making-do" and have influenced the course of the exchanges, we do not see them in a negative way. The significant point is that the letters still go back and forth. Just as any correspondents go through changes in circumstances in their lives and situations, so our changes and difficulties have to be accepted as part of normal life.

After two years of the exchange Les visited England again, and we took the opportunity to spend a lot of time analysing the exchanges and writing a book about the project and what we have learned from it. The most important thing is that these young children, from the beginning, functioned totally efficiently and appropriately as correspondents. From their first replies they revealed an ability to handle dialogue, and the relationships implicit in the dialogue, in a strategic way. They were able to accommodate to the social and spatial distance of exchanging letters with adults. In the first letters they demonstrated that they knew they could tell other people about themselves and ask other people about themselves, that referring to shared experience was a good way to start a written relationship, and that it was nice to express friendship in an explicit way.

As the exchanges progressed the children showed that they could generate novel topics, sustain topics and, when appropriate, close topics. They did so in ways that were always friendly... well, almost. On one occasion, when Nigel had been a bit slow in replying to the children, a letter arrived.

Dear Nigel
Will you please get a move on with your letter. I have been waiting ages and ages for you to write me a letter. I wish you would hurry up. If you don't write soon I will never write to you again. What is holding you up?
Love David

Needless to say the letter had its desired effect, and within one day Nigel had written back. That six-year-old knew how to elicit a response from an adult.

A more gentle, almost philosophic response came one day from Helen:

Dear Nigel
Thank you for all the letters you have written to me. I will keep on writing to you and I hope you will keep on writing to me and I like writing letters to you. I like writing to you because you can draw pictures and find things out.
Love Helen

After two years, our overall feeling about the project is amazement at the degree of commitment and control of the children. Although they were young, they had the capacity to write with feeling, with intensity, with humor, and with considerable power. They readily agreed to write to Les and Nigel and they regularly keep them interested and amused. They put up with our meanderings, our interruptions and our occasional visits to talk to them. Watching them grow as people and authors has been a quite extraordinary experience. One of the children wrote in a letter: "And I'll always be your friend." That is how we now feel towards all the children with whom we correspond. §§

WRITING CAN CHANGE THINGS ... TRY IT!

Dear Teacher...
Dear Diary...
Dear John...
Dear Mr. Gorbachev...
DEAR SANTA...

To whom it may concern....

INTERACTIVE WRITING: THE KEY TO UNLOCKING A SHY SECOND GRADER

Sharon Wilson
St. Andrews Episcopal School, Austin, Texas

As a new convert to the joys of teaching early reading, I planned to use interactive writing with my second grade students to explore some intriguing connections between reading and writing ability. The initial motivation for my setting up an interactive writing project centered on an assumption that proficient readers are likely to be proficient writers and struggling readers are likely to be less skilled writers. I was curious to see if this was true of my students. However, this initial goal quickly became obscured by the wealth of communications that soon flourished between the students and me. Exposure to the children's authentic language richly broadened my perspectives.

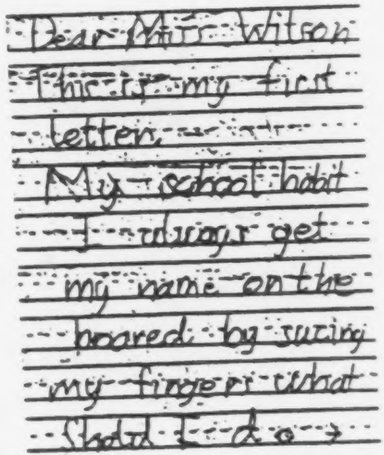
Near the beginning of the school year I decided that an easy and enjoyable way to introduce interactive writing would be through the idea of letter writing. I held a discussion with my students about mail. Through their enthusiastic response, it was immediately apparent that they unanimously loved to receive letters, cards and so forth through the mail. Many students conceded that in order to receive letters, one must occasionally write letters. This was my opportunity to suggest that the students write letters to me, and in return I would write back to them.

The following day, I placed two small mailboxes in the two classrooms in which I teach. These mailboxes were made out of cardboard shoe boxes with arched lids to suggest a mailbox shape. They were covered with blue and white paper and personalized for each classroom. The schedule for mail collection and delivery was as follows: in classroom A I collected mail on Monday and Wednesday afternoons and delivered mail on Tuesday and Thursday mornings; in classroom B mail collection was Tuesday and Thursday afternoons and delivery on Wednesday and Friday mornings. The students were encouraged to write letters whenever they had a few spare minutes and to feel free to put the letters in the mailboxes at anytime. There was, however, no obligation to write. If the number of letters was light in one class, I would often pick up mail from the other class too and deliver it all the next day, so our schedules were fairly flexible.

Within the first six weeks of our interactive writing, I gained many insights. First, this project demonstrated that the children had the desire to communicate. During this time, 73% of the children in classroom A and 82% of the children in classroom B chose to write letters to me on their own time, with no requirement to do so. Additionally, this exchange of letters encouraged a growth of intimacy between the students and me. I also developed a clearer understanding of the various purposes for communication expressed by these children through their letters — they sought to persuade, entertain, gain clarification, etc.

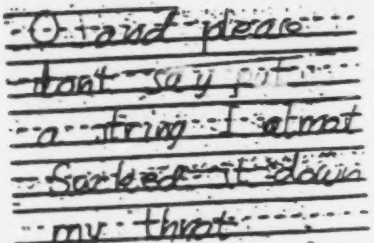
Lindfors (1987) states that writing is a way for children to organize their thoughts for the purpose of reflection and consideration. I discovered the truth of this with my students also. The children's need to reflect and consider, through the medium of writing, provided me with a heart-warming and unexpected bonus from this interactive writing project. A little girl, whom I will call Lisa, was at the center of this wonderful experience.

Although I had already taught Lisa in first grade for another subject and was now teaching her reading in second grade, she conversed with me mainly in monosyllables, despite my sincere encouragement of a richer exchange. Our interactive writing was soon to change all this. At the beginning of the second week of letter writing, I received the following letter from Lisa:



Dear Mrs Wilson
This is my first
letter.
My school habit
I always get
my name on the
boared by suing
my fingers what
Shold I do ?

(continued p. 6)



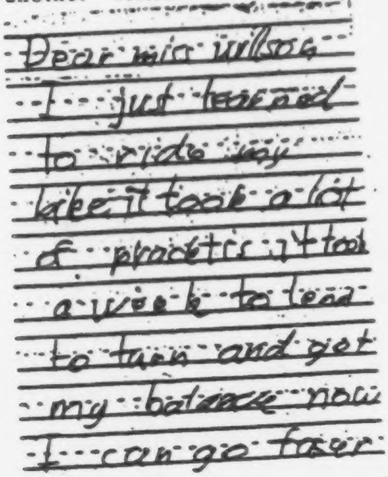
O and please
dont say put
a string I almot
Sucked it down
my throat

"Dear Miss Wilson, This is my first letter. My school habit I always get my name on the board by sucking my fingers. What should I do? Oh, and please don't say put a string. I almost sucked it down my throat."

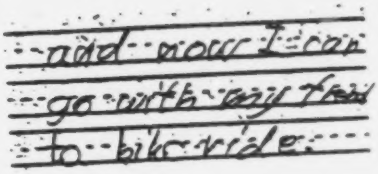
Figure 1.

I wrote back immediately, expressing my enjoyment at her amusing portrayal of her problem, and I suggested a solution I thought might help. She came up to me a few days later and volunteered that my suggestion was working. She spoke several sentences to me, and we even laughed together.

Several weeks went by before I received another letter. However, now we seemed to have forged a slender bond between us based on our shared knowledge of a problem. Although she did not initiate any conversation, she was responsive to all my attempts. Three weeks later I received another letter.



Dear mis wilson
I just leaned
to ride my
bike it took a lot
of practis it took
a week to lean
to turn and get
my balance now
I can go faser



and now I can
go with my frend
to bike ride.

"Dear Miss Wilson. I just learned to ride my bike. It took a lot of practice. It took a week to learn to turn and get my balance. Now I can go faster and now I can go with my friend to bike ride."

Figure 2.

I wrote back praising her persistence with a difficult task, and shared an anecdote about my childhood.

As the weeks passed, Lisa would occasionally strike up conversations and appeared more comfortable and relaxed when conversing with me. During the following months she continued to write letters to me periodically, but they began to take on new forms. Now she included poems, stories, pictures with no text, and later a sweet valentine.

As I reflect back over this interactive writing experience, many revelations come to mind. Quite clearly there has been a significant growth in the students and me as effective communicators. The development of rapport I felt with these second graders after just a few months of interactive writing was extremely gratifying. Finally and undeniably, interactive writing enabled a shy child to overcome some communication barriers by providing a medium from which her thoughts and feelings could flow. §§

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NEXT ISSUE

INTERACTIVE WRITING IN CONTENT AREAS (FALL 1989)

In the past couple of years, one of the central concerns of teachers and researchers has been the integration of reading and writing with academic content areas. In this issue, we will focus on the role of interactive writing for exploring, reflecting on, and learning content. We welcome articles giving a rationale for using interactive writing in content courses, describing specific programs or approaches, or summarizing research. Areas of interest might include science, math, social studies, literature, or foreign languages, at all ages and grade levels.

Please send articles of 2 to 3 double spaced typed pages, or notes of any length, to Joy Peyton at CAL by July 15, 1989.

If you type your article using MacWrite, Ready-Set-Go, or Microsoft Word, you can send your articles on 3.5" floppy disks. Please send along a paper copy also. Thanks!

DO DIALOGUE JOURNALS MAKE A DIFFERENCE FOR FIRST GRADERS?

Barbara Bode
University of South Florida at Tampa

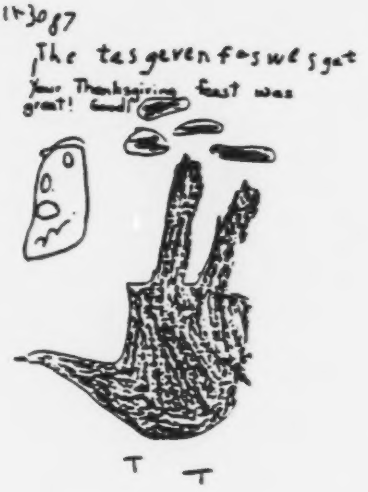
Students in kindergarten and first grade are introduced to the connection of oral language to print in many ways. Reading stories orally, having someone write down a child's dictated story or dialogue, and using the language experience approach are now well-established methods used to provide a link between oral and written language. Each of these methods integrates listening, speaking, and reading.

Dialogue journal writing can provide a necessary additional approach to promote literacy development by integrating listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Donald Graves (1983) has suggested that students can begin writing with invented spelling with a knowledge of six letters and their sounds. As children use this knowledge to begin to communicate messages, their awareness of print is enhanced, and the act of encoding messages forces them to make, test, and revise hypotheses about writing (Ferreiro & Teberosky, 1982). Language modeling in a written response can enhance this process.

Dialogue journal writing is one way in which these processes for early literacy development can take place. Students use whatever resources they have available to communicate a message in writing, and the teacher's response provides them the opportunity to read and a language model.

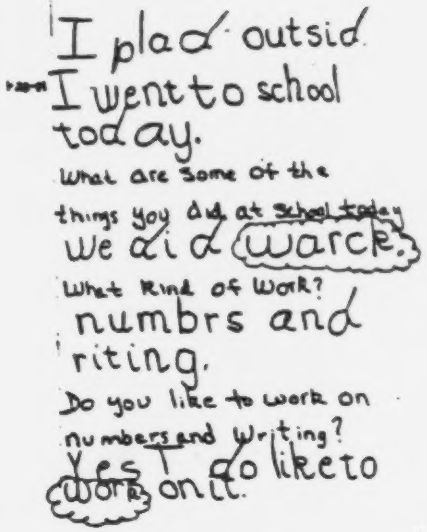
A recent study of dialogue journal writing with first graders in Pasco County, Florida (Bode, 1988) showed that dialogue journal writing with teachers or parents had a powerful effect on the students' overall achievement. During the 1987-88 school year, 204 first grade children were involved in a dialogue journal writing research project. Three schools comparable in SES level, achievement, and curricula were chosen by the county. In one school, the *parents wrote to the chidren* three times a week for five months in "written conversation books." In the second school, the *teachers wrote to the children* in their classroom with the same frequency and for the same period of time. A third school, which served as a comparison school, *did not use dialogue journals*.

The children usually wrote the first entry (although teachers of students of lower literacy development reported it was easier if they initiated the first entry) and read it as necessary to the parent or teacher, who wrote back using conventional spelling for any invented spelling. The children were encouraged to draw, but this only occurred in the teacher-student dialogues (see Figure 1). If necessary, the adults read their entries aloud to the children. Many times the children incorporated in subsequent entries conventional spelling that was modeled (as in Figure 2). The adults were encouraged to match the children's entries in length and to ask open-ended questions.



11-30 87
The tas geven fas we s gat
Your Thanksgiving feast was great! Good!

Figure 1.



I plad outsid
I went to school today.
What are some of the things you did at school today
We did warck.
What kind of work?
numbrs and riting.
Do you like to work on numbers and writing?
Yes I do like to work on it.

(The child's writing and researcher's model are marked here, for illustration.)

Figure 2.

In April the 204 students were given the Stanford Achievement Test, which measures word reading, reading comprehension, word study skills, spelling achievement, vocabulary, and listening comprehension; the Metropolitan Achievement Writing Test, which measures holistic evaluation, sentence formation, word usage, content development, and writing mechanics; and the Schonell Spelling Test, which has a dictated spelling format. When these tests were grouped to form a new "super-variable" the scores of the parent ($p<.039$) and teacher ($p<.000$) groups both singly and together ($p<.004$) were significantly higher than those of the comparison school. The holistic writing evaluation and reading comprehension scores accounted for most of the difference between the groups.

The comparison group of students was not significantly higher than either of the dialogue journal groups on any variable. The parent ($p<.01$) and teacher ($p<.05$) groups both scored significantly higher than the comparison group on the holistic writing evaluation. The parent group scored significantly higher than the teacher and comparison groups on several variables: reading comprehension (parent vs. comparison, $p<.01$; parent vs. teacher, $p<.05$); dictated spelling (parent vs. comparison, $p<.05$; parent vs. teacher, $p<.01$); listening comprehension (parent vs. comparison, $p<.01$), sentence formation (parent vs. comparison, $p<.01$), word study skills (parent vs. teacher, $p<.01$) and spelling (parent vs. teacher, $p<.01$).

An additional hypothesis tested was that a more integrated approach to language arts would result in higher intercorrelations among the specific outcome variables studied. Analysis of intercorrelations among the dependent variables across the groups showed that intercorrelations of reading, writing, and spelling measures were more frequent and higher for those students using dialogue journals.

In summary, achievement on standardized tests was higher for students using dialogue journal writing, and the interrelatedness of the language arts outcome measures increased with the use of the integrative dialogue journal approach. Dialogue journal writing with first graders, using invented spelling naturally facilitates the development of literacy, building on its oral language base. It is possible that dialogue journal writing can be used by parents, teachers, volunteers, or older students in cross-age tutoring situations with children beginning formal literacy instruction. In time, it may prove to be a powerful, essential approach to beginning literacy instruction. §§

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Editor's Note:

This report of new research by Bode brings up some important issues. We thought it important to share the author's summary of her work with our readers, and our own comments and questions. — JS

Did the comparison school have the same orientation toward literacy, invented spelling, etc. as the two dialogue journal treatment schools? We have often found that schools and teachers who use dialogue journals successfully are more oriented toward a "whole language" approach than others. If there were some emerging philosophical differences between the schools, the significant differences in outcomes Bode found may reflect more than just the dialogue journal treatment, even though schools were comparable objectively. Even so, such differences are worth pursuing. We have never argued for dialogue journals as a method of instruction, per se, and find that their effective use depends greatly on their context.

The parent involvement project opens new dimensions for dialogue journal use. We have been looking for effective models involving parents and children in written dialogue. We plan to describe more of how Bode developed and maintained the parents' involvement in a future issue.

Barbara has published another article in the April 1989 issue of *The Reading Teacher*, giving more information about this interesting research.

BRINGING HOME AND SCHOOL TOGETHER: WRITTEN DIALOGUE BETWEEN TEACHERS AND PARENTS

Gillian Dowley McNamee
Erikson Institute, Chicago, IL

Teachers in a Head Start program in a black inner city community on Chicago's west side were looking for ways to improve the education of the children, particularly in the area of literacy development. One way they decided to accomplish this was through more effective communication between the school staff and the children's parents by letting the parents know what the children were learning, reading, writing, and enjoying in school. Some of this sharing took place in parent meetings, but a unique teacher-parent dialogue in writing was developed as well.

The teachers had a small notebook for each child, and every week they wrote one or two sentences in it about the child and sent it home with the child for the parents to read. The parents were asked to do the same and send the notebook back to school. The long-term goal of these written dialogues was to build a partnership between the home and school that would support the children's development by building a *shared* understanding of what they were doing, and what helped them grow and learn. The more the parents and teacher knew about what the children were like at home and school, the more connections and bridges could be made for them as they moved between the two settings.

All comments in the notebooks had to be positive; if there was a problem or difficulty, it had to be handled in person or over the phone. The teacher and parents used this opportunity to highlight and mention some small yet pleasurable moment in the child's week. The children knew that their teacher and parents were writing about them in the notebook, and they loved hearing the entries read, sometimes over and over again.

Initially, much work went into helping both staff and parents overcome self-conscious feelings about their literacy skills and reminding them of the purpose of the dialogue. However, once initial hesitations were overcome, they both entered into the dialogue enthusiastically. The teachers were motivated to write in order to slowly reinforce and emphasize the educational goals of their programs and reassure parents that their children were learning in developmentally appropriate activities. The parents readily responded to the good feelings about their children embodied in the dialogue. These dynamics can be seen in the journal entries below, which come from the dialogues between one of the teachers and the parents of two different children. The entries are presented here exactly as they were written.

Dear Parent
Today Natalie was the leader during our large motor activity, with her the children had a lovely time.
Ms. Stevens

Natalie made a car out of a box for me two days it was very pretty with her real car in it
sign Carla

Dear Parents
Natalie played a game showing her favorite letter from a chart, and saying the letter.
Ms. Stevens

Natalie went and played in the snow with her girl friend after school and make little snow man.

Dear Parents
Natalie played a new game with her friends.
Thank you
Ms. Stevens

Natalie played with her girl friend and help make cake with me and Joyce little girl

Dear Parents:
Natalie was very helpful today. She straighten the puzzle's in the puzzle rack.
Thank you
Ms. Stevens

Natalie went outside and played with friend and played game

Dear Parent:
Natalie drew a beautiful picture of a tree with blueberries on it at the easel.
Ms. Stevens

Natalie played with her friend out door all day with her doll

(continued on page 10)

Dear Parents:
Natalie sung a beautiful song to her teacher that she made up I love you
Ms. Stevens

Natalie went to the store with me and had losts of fun playing on the bus and singing

This parent-teacher dialogue reflects several important messages and shared understandings being built. First, both teacher and parent comments are full of affection for the child; Natalie's achievements are cherished at home and at school. Helping others, taking good care of belongings, and contributing to the group — be it family or classmates — are important values in both settings. Appreciation of learning in the context of play is strong for both adults.

In a dialogue between Ms. Stevens and a second parent, we can see that the teacher communicates and elicits from the parents good will, confidence, and respect for their child, which then become strong parts of the context of learning for the child at home and at school.

Dear Parents
Arthur share with the classroom what he had- for Christmas Arthur was very happy today.
Ms. Stevens

Dear teachers.
Arthur was Very Good this Week at Home. Arthur Helped Make his Bed and take out the Trash.
Ms Abbott

Dear Parents
At the animal show Arthur felt the skin of a real snake.
Ms. Stevens

Dear Teachers,
Arthur has been very good. He made angels in the snow. He also is trying to make a square, circle, triangle and a cross.
Ms. Abbott

Dear Parents:
Arthur was very helpful today he ask if he could help tidy the classroom up.
Thank you
Ms. Stevens

Arthur is doing very good this week. He knows how to make the letters B, D, G. He is also trying to write his name.
Ms. Abbott

Dear Parent:
Arthur enjoy talking with his friends and teachers. He was very happy today.
Ms. Stevens

Dear Teachers:
Arthur enjoyed going to the museum. Very much and all the animal
Ms. Abbott

It was surprising how simple and yet how powerful and satisfying this written exchange of comments was for all involved. For the adults in the community to feel that they could begin to write and read in this more public sort of way, even though their skills might need improving, was an important step in their own ongoing literacy development, as well as their children's. Meanwhile, Head Start children watched the important adults in their lives talk about their growing up in positive and playful ways, and saw that a good deal of this important communication could be done through writing and reading. §§

Coming Up! A Day of Interactive Writing, NCTE Annual Convention
Tuesday, November 21, 1989, Baltimore, Maryland
"Interactive writing with ESL students: Building confidence and language fluency and developing literacy"
This day-long workshop will:

- Outline the theoretical basis for and benefits and essential qualities of interactive writing for promoting students' language acquisition and writing development
- Review various ways that interactive writing (in letters, dialogue journals, electronic mail, local area computer networks) can be used with students from early elementary to college levels
- Give opportunities to write interactively on a local area computer network and in dialogue journals

Resource manuals, bibliographies, and articles will be available.
The workshop leaders have extensive experience using and studying interactive writing at different grade levels, from early elementary to college: Joy Kreeft Peyton, Jana Staton, JoAnn Mackinson, and Diane Thompson. For registration information write to: NCTE Convention, 1111 Kenyon Road, Urbana, IL 61801.

SPECIAL PULLOUT SECTION: THE TOPIC OF TOPICS

Jana Staton

> *"I like to write a lot I dont know why maybe cause I got something to write."* - Laura, age 11

One major way in which dialogue journals are distinguished from assigned classroom writing [and from many instances of assigned journal keeping] are that both student and teacher are relatively free to introduce and discuss almost any topic of interest. There is no guarantee, of course, that the other participant will find your topic interesting, but the freedom is there.

But some teachers are uncomfortable about the value of allowing students to choose their own topics, and thus uncomfortable with dialogue journal writing itself. This discomfort may come from the belief that topics have some inherent power to "make good writing happen." Somewhere there is a set of "good topics" which every child will eagerly write about, even though we would never apply this same rule to conversation. And students encourage this belief by coming up and saying " I don't know what to write" -- probably is a translation of "I don't know what you want me to write about."

WHERE DO TOPICS COME FROM?

A topic is what any given discourse or text is "about". Topic is thus a relative concept, defined by in relation to its particular context. Linguistics, which studies and describes language scientifically, has admitted difficulty in defining "topic" beyond the notion of "aboutness". The difficulty comes from the fact that topics exist at the deepest levels of communication, as the underlying propositions to which surface linguistic forms refer. A topic has no single structural feature to identify it, unlike nouns and verbs or other language forms (Keenan and Schieffelin, 1978).

Topics are subject to certain conventions of cooperation (called maxims) including relevance and informativeness. Topics are characterized as relevant to the entire flow of discourse, and writers or speakers cooperate with each other by providing enough, but not too much information about the topic in a clear and unambiguous manner.

Providing sufficient, relevant information is made more difficult by the fact that in both thought and speaking, the "topic" changes continually, depending on what has gone before and on each participant's agenda for the conversation. It is this active process of construction which dialogue journals can best encourage and amplify, and in so doing, provide a bridge from thinking and speaking to effective writing.

Dialogue journal conversations, like naturally occurring oral conversations, take advantage of and build on the fluid, internally generated nature of topics in human language. In an ongoing dialogue, topics emerge, develop, dissolve or merge into other topics, and are dropped without external control or planning. It can be unnerving at first, but this kind of topic flow is close to thinking -- a thinking together or mutual co-construction of ideas. For that very reason, dialogue journal writing is not like the precise, logical progression of a finished essay. Nor should it be, anymore than a deep conversation with friends about an important topic is [in form] like the finished speech one might give about the same topic.

In dialogue journals there can be opportunity after opportunity for students to go through the complete mental process of choosing a topic focus, and constructing an initial comment on that focus. It is this mental activity which is so crucial, and is in fact the adult or mature thinking process at which children need to become more proficient. In real life, we are always confronted with the need to focus on and define the problem to be solved, to ask good questions. Only in school, doing school tasks, is there much call for being able to answer questions and solve already constructed problems. While we do not ask young children to think on this level unaided, the natural scaffolding provided in a dialogue enables them to gain access to and practice the strategies involved in focusing and developing a topic, with no penalties for failure.

Learning to provide sufficient, relevant information about a topic in writing is one of the major problems for beginning writers, and for anyone with little exposure to written literacy. Whenever teachers "assign" a topic, they are doing all the mental work of deciding for the student what is relevant and informative about an experience or event.

Such topics then take on the characteristic of a test question, eliciting what can be called a test response. This short-circuits the necessarily complex thought processes that we want our students to develop on their own.

One confirmation of this argument is our impression that we have discovered relatively few dialogue journal entries, in which the topics lacked coherence and internal logic (although many elementary students do not at first mark topic shifts with paragraphs). Initially, we expected to find many examples of the "topic associating" style described by Michaels (1985). After analyzing entries for coherence and organization, we gave up this line of inquiry. Only much later did we look again at the essays of these same students writing on assigned topics, and found in these examples ample evidence of implicit topics and sudden, unmarked topic shifts. Clearly, it seems that new research efforts might explore the relationship between the process of focusing and developing topics required in interactive written dialogues (in journals or on computer networks) and the resulting topic focus and coherence of the writing that results, in comparison to traditional classroom practice.

WHAT HAPPENS IF STUDENTS CHOOSE THEIR OWN TOPICS?

Specific topics always occur within the context of a frame or background, a larger space of knowledge, experience, etc. To say that dialogue journals work best when students are free to chose their own topics does not mean the teachers do not have an important task. The task, however, is one of defining and suggesting a broader frame or context order to get the conversation going, and to establish some limits for reasons of privacy.

At the elementary level, dialogue journals seem to work best when this 'topic frame' or context is very broad, encompassing everything that impinges on the school day -- recess, lunch, the school bus as well as the classroom and its members. Permitting students to choose their own topics allows them to integrate their own lives with school concerns.

In contrast, at high school or adult levels, a more carefully defined frame can sometimes be helpful. Such a "frame" is usually related to the class or shared context, within which students are still free to bring up whatever topics concern or interest them, and also to depart into more social or personal concerns when necessary.

In the upper elementary level class we studied where students were free to write about whatever topics they wished, academic topics were still addressed in over half the entries throughout the year (Staton and Peyton, 1988). The incidence of personal concerns and topics did increase as students and teacher got to know one another better. It appears that if there are interesting things going on in the classroom, and genuinely difficult projects to accomplish, students will want and need to write about those topics as much as they do about more personal concerns, without having to be "assigned." Then their comments come out of real thinking and puzzlement.

At college, mutually engaging, substantive topics, which we call "hot topics", emerged from the general background of chit chat, space fillers, and question-answer exchanges after 9 or 10 turns (Staton, 1984). What was most interesting about this finding was that it was the number of exchanges, not the chronological length of time, which determined when a student and teacher would find an interesting topic to carry them beyond desultory chatter. That is, if a teacher chose to have students write only once a week, "hot" topics would emerge after about 9-10 weeks (9 turns). In contrast, if a teacher chose to have students turn in their journals 2-3 times a week, "hot" topics emerged on the average after 3-4 weeks, again about 9 turns.

The value of these continuing conversations we call dialogues is that they offer students opportunities to acquire the strategies for focusing and elaborating on a topic, and of making their comments relevant, coherent and interesting for the other person.

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Suggestions from Leslee Reed

[These comments by Leslee Reed in response to common questions asked by teachers using dialogue journals provide one experienced teacher's perspective on making dialogue journals work effectively in the classroom.]

WHAT DO I TELL MY STUDENTS TO WRITE ABOUT?

The best thing about the dialogue is that the students decide what to write to me. I am not responsible for telling my students what to write about! They generate their own topics, even on the first day of school. That first day I usually suggest some starters, such as "I am a student in Room 11". My suggestions are so dull, that most students immediately reject them in favor of what's on their mind, and after that, I never have to suggest ideas. Some days there isn't much to write about, and the students know that's OK, too.

Jan. 15

Laura*: Yes. I will work more. Yes I read at home. Mrs. Reed Adrien he sey bad word to Mrs. L and sametains to me.*

On other days, when there is an important event or topic, the same child will write expansively. [Laura has just moved to the United States from Europe, and is learning English in a regular classroom.]

Jan. 16

Laura*: Yes I like the film I fel sorry for all the people they did not ave work but now they ave everything. Martin Luther King was very nice.*

I like to pleay tennes is good sports for me and for every bety. Mrs. Reed you can go too. for you it is good sports. You know I sa lot of people like 75 yers old they are very very very old for pleay tennes. des way is good for every bety.

Mrs. Reed I owp [hope] every bety be in life [alive] cause lot of old people ded. My grand father and my grand Mother are ded. I sa my grand father ded he was very good man and good grand father but now is pes [passed] 2 yers. today I like to write a lot I danth know way meaybe cas I got samenithing to write.

Every child has different interests and concerns; in one day, even though they have all sat through the same lessons and done the same work, they have different perspectives on what happened, and how they felt about it. I always suggest that my students tell me what they liked and didn't like about the work we are doing--that gives them a wide latitude. Here are some brief excerpts which show just how creative and different students' topics are in just one day, in the same classroom [March 10, 1980, in this case.]

Sam*: I didn't think our presentation was well put across. We wrote a diferent one and I liked it a lot because I wrote it myself. [but] it was a waste of time.*

Joan*: Today was Ok. You have to talk to Tai & Liz for me. I liked the speeches we did on Arbor day.*

Lorie*: I liked doing that speech today because it got done. The art was messy. I could have done without it.*

Willie*: Today I enjoyed the lesson on looking at the plants. Perhaps I kept the magnifying glass to long but when you took it I wasn't half through. Tai still started calling me names and when Joan heard Tai, she called me the same name.....*

Some students are into sports, and will want to talk about that; girls at sixth grade are very interested in fashion and clothes, so I will ask them what they think of high boots, and whether they think I would enjoy wearing boots like that!

We also read a lot in my classroom, and they will often comment about a book they have just finished reading. So I might ask them if I would enjoy reading that book. So they have to evaluate their own reactions, and how mine might differ. I have students say "No, I don't think you would like it!" which always makes me a bit curious about the book.

I think the dialogue journal is one of the best strategies to get student to think. They are so used to being told what to do, what to think, what to say and what to write. When they get into junior high and high school, they will suddenly be asked to start thinking for themselves, and we have to prepare them for autonomy. The more we ask them to let us know what what they are thinking, and wait for an answer, the more we cause them to think for themselves.

I get this so much : "I really understood math today,"or "I'm still having trouble with this-- I know you helped me, but I'm still having trouble." It isn't just getting your kids to do dialogue journals, but getting them into a different way of thinking --reflecting a bit more on what they are doing, whatever it is.

> Gordon: *Today wasn't one of my best days. It was my very worst. I can't believe this. From now on I am staying in at recess and at lunch. Because I cannot really have a good day when I am out there.*

> Mrs. Reed: *Such a lot of good thinking! It is your choice to stay in and you know it is ok with me.*

In the classroom, we cannot always wait for an answer, and students become so well-trained that they don't want to give an answer unless it's the right one. But the dialogue journal is a private space, and they have time to reflect and discuss their own ideas. That's why it's so important not to give students a list of suggested journal topics If you visited a young friend, you wouldn't begin the conversation by telling her the topics she might talk about!

THE TEACHER'S TOPICS: WHAT DO I WRITE ABOUT?

I try to always let the student initiate the topic, and then build on that topic, maybe by supplying information, or asking a question that is a genuine one-- one that I don't know the answer to. It often helps to ask them to be a little more specific about some aspect of a topic that they have introduced.

For children that you want to get a little more involved, you can ask their opinion about experiences that you know are of interest to them. "Did you prefer this or that?" so that they have a choice to make. When they have given their opinion, then you can go further in exploring with them why they liked it better. I tend not to ask information questions; I'm more interested in their opinions about things:

Another general approach I use is to ask their advice. "We have some extra time on Friday: what do you think we should do?" You can take them into your confidence about your thinking and your problems: "I need to get the class more involved in choosing their own books for sustained silent reading. Do you have any suggestions about what would work?" It's so flattering when anyone asks us for an opinion. I love to do it when I'm starting a bulletin board. I'll appoint a committee and then in the journals, I will ask each one for suggestions. Often, they are dumbfounded that I'm not just telling them what to do, but asking them to think and to give me ideas. Students are very important people but we very seldom give them the opportunity to show their worth.

Comparing lessons is even a good topic: if we worked on fractions yesterday and today, I might ask if they understood it better today than yesterday. I always tell my students that I am trying to be a good teacher, but that I have a lot to learn, and they can help me by telling me in their journals about my lessons, about what worked for them and where they had difficulty. Were they good, or bad, or boring?. If a lesson was boring, why? I use the journals to help the students become part of the teaching team, I don't want to teach them something they already know.

HOW MUCH SHOULD I WRITE ABOUT A TOPIC? WHAT'S A GOOD RESPONSE?

One of the few rules I set for myself--and it's obviously flexible-- is not to write more than the student writes. If I get a brief entry from a child, I try to respond briefly. A long entry allows me to elaborate more, as I am sure that the child has done a lot of thinking about that topic, and will want to read more about it. With my students, writing about as much as they do in response has always worked well--and it's a good discipline for me as a writer, not to allow myself to go on and on but to get right to the point.

Teachers have to make their responses interesting and worth reading, just as in a good conversation. You can't keep echoing what someone else has said. You have to bring up a new topic, or think of a variation on the other person's topic. It's easy to just make a pleasant comment and move on, but that is a kind of laziness. I find that I learn so much from what my students write to me: after so many years, I still can't wait to read what they write.

LEARNING FROM FIRST GRADERS HOW TO USE DIALOGUE JOURNALS: A TEACHER'S PERSPECTIVE

Jill Dillard
Summit Elementary, Cincinnati, Ohio

My teaching is often a rough draft. I set out with good plans, organized thoughts, and sound ideas, but once in the midst of things, I find myself reflecting-in-action (Schon, 1983), improvising, and revising. It happened again when I introduced dialogue journals in a first grade classroom.

On Wednesday, October 1, 1986, I stepped into Room 106, introduced myself as the reading teacher, and presented the students with the idea of "lit logs" — dialogue journals for book talks. "Mrs. Baum and I came to school very early this morning and made lit logs for you. 'Lit' is a nickname for a longer word. How many of you have a nickname?..." Neither the teacher (a long-term substitute) nor I knew exactly how to go about the activity, so we decided to plunge right in and learn by doing. Teaming together, we used Nancie Atwell's ideas (1985) as resources and designed our approach with her ideas in mind. We thought students could choose to write to either of us and we would be able to respond back within the half-hour time frame we had set for the activity. We used this approach once a week and had a routine going by the time the first grade teacher returned from maternity leave.

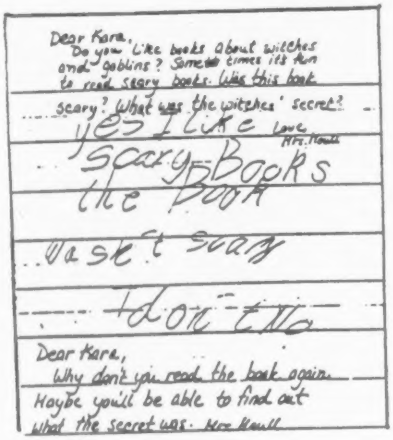
Thrilled by the students' responses, I renegotiated the activity and began a teaching partnership with Mrs. Maull. We continued using the same procedure, but it wasn't long before the initial way started to falter. Doing lit logs required on-the-spot thinking, rushing about the classroom, reading aloud, and talking. The immediacy of the situation, the unpredictable nature of first graders, and the ordinary demands of everyday teaching caught up with us. The number of students writing each teacher became uneven and we wanted our teaming effort to be equal. In addition, the first graders were becoming readers and writers themselves and were writing longer notes. The project was now taking 45 minutes rather than 30 to complete in an already curriculum-crowded day. These issues made us uncomfortable with this interactive writing experience.

To combat the first of these dilemmas, we divided the class and suggested that one half write each of us, alternating teachers every week. Our solution for the other problem was to respond to each student only once during classtime, and then make a second response later in the school day, away from students or at home.

With the task managed to our satisfaction, we were more at ease. Since we were no longer tied up in our teacher concerns, we began picking up vibrations from the students, and we became even better at knowing how to do lit logs.

Lexie wanted to know if she had to write about a different book each week. We listened when she told us about a book's staying power and immediately gave the class the okay to continue topics from previous weeks.

Janelle wasn't answering our questions, while others' responses were simply cloning them (Figure 1). We realized students had their own ideas about books and needed freedom from our directives so they could express what mattered to them. Instead of asking so many questions in our letters, we began to make meaningful statements about reading, authors, and books (Figure 2).



Dear Kara,
Do you like books about witches and goblins? Sometimes its fun to read scary books. Was this book scary? What was the witches' secret?
Love,
Mrs. Maull

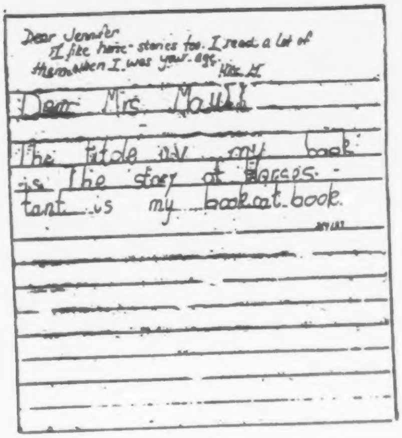
yes I Like
Scary Books
the Book
wase t scary
I don't kno

Dear Kara,
Why don't you read the book again. Maybe you'll be able to find out what the secret was. Mrs Maull

Figure 1

Teacher Directed Questions

Yes, I like
scary books.
The book
wasn't scary.
I don't know.



Dear Jennifer
I like horse stories too. I read a lot of them when I was your age.
Mrs. M.

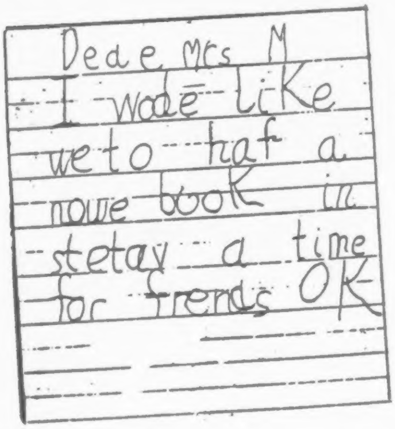
Dear Mrs Maull
The titole av my book
is The story of Horses
tant is my bookcat book.

Figure 2

Meaningful Statement

The title of my book
is The Story of Horses.
That is my book chat book.

When Matt wrote that he wanted something different to read (we brought in stacks of books), books were traded, and lit log conversations naturally began to reflect these exchanges (Figures 3 & 4).

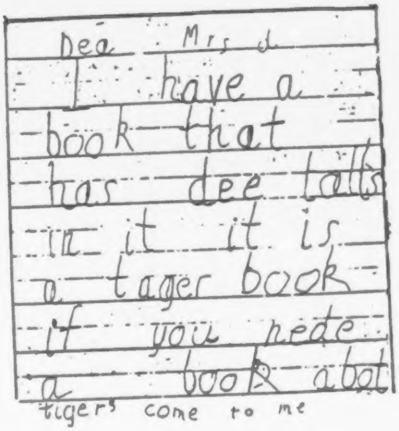


Dede Mrs M
I wode like
we to haf a
nowe book in
stetav a time
for frends OK

Figure 3

Book Request

I would like
to have a
new book
instead of A Time
for Friends. Okay?



Dea Mrs D
I have a
book that
has dee talls
in it it is
a tager book
if you nede
a book abot
tigers come to me

Figure 4

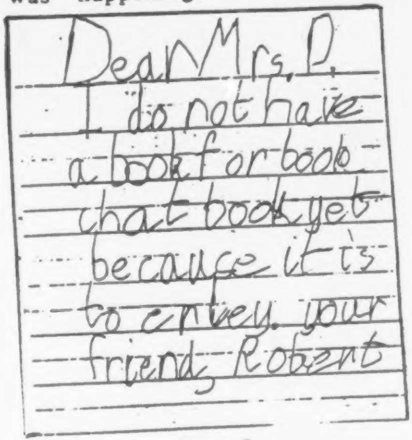
Book Trading

I have a
book that
has details
in it. It is
a tiger book.
If you need
a book about
tigers, come to me.

Some students found it either more satisfying or less complicated to write the same teacher each week. Over time, we saw this too. It didn't matter to us anymore if our teaching responsibilities were even. We felt the force of the activity and sensed we were becoming more than "book buddies" with some students.

Robert's note suggested Monday wasn't the best day for lit logs (Figure 5). Students were usually beginning new books and didn't have much to write about them. Scheduling lit logs the same day as oral book chats worked better. Students were able to rehearse some of their ideas in writing before the discussion groups met (Figure 6).

Nancy wanted her teacher's responses to be shorter. The act of reading a lengthy letter bogged her down when she wanted to get on with her writing. Stacey, on the other hand, required longer notes. She wrote them, so it seemed only fair to write them back. During the months, we learned what mattered wasn't the number of words we wrote, but the simple fact that interaction was happening.

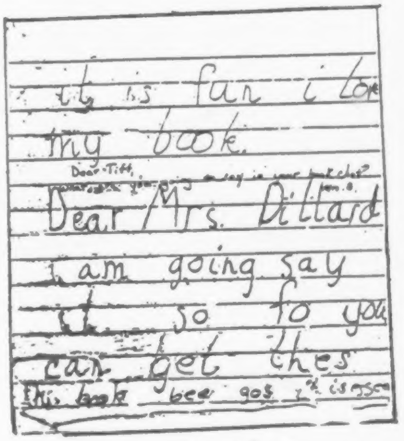


Dear Mrs. D.
I do not have
a book for book
chat book yet
because it is
to erley. your
friend, Robert

Figure 5

Too Early in the Week

I do not have
a book for book
chats yet
because it is
too early. Your
friend, Robert



it is fun i lok
my book.

Dear Tiff,
[illegible] you going to say in your book chat?
Mrs. D.

Dear Mrs. Dillard
i am going say
it so to you
can get thes
this book bee gos it is esee

Figure 6

Preparing for Book Chats

I am going to say
you can get this
book because it is easy.

Not everything went perfectly when I tried lit logs in this first grade classroom. But rarely is my first draft the final. Things get *(cont. p. 17)*

Notes from the Field

Abdullah Mizhir, from the Irbid Directorate of Education, Irbid, Jordan, learned about dialogue journals during a recent visit to the Center for Applied Linguistics, in Washington, DC. He returned to Jordan, eager to get the teachers he works with started. He writes the following:

I am glad to say that three of the high school teachers in Irbid City, where I supervise the teaching of English as a foreign language, have started keeping journals with their classes; each with a class of 30-40 students in grades 9, 10, or 11. Students write three times a week (every other day) and their teachers write back every time. First reactions from both teachers and students are very encouraging. Both parties show enthusiasm and interest. Two teachers are planning to start soon. I keep visiting these teachers to encourage and help.

* * *

"Even an 'older' graduate student likes personal communication."

I am finishing up my Ed.D. degree at New York University; I expect my orals will be spring semester, 1989. I was in a graduate-level seminar recently (not at NYU) with a very famous professor and his younger partner. They asked for "free responses" to the discussions and readings, and promised written comments on these informal weekly papers. I was pleased, of course, at the prospect of a personal dialogue with them. Even an older graduate student likes personal communication. But I was disappointed, finally, at the tardiness and paucity of their responses. I'm sure the same thing happens to junior and senior high students and their overworked teachers. Any thoughts on this?

Doris Armstrong
286 North Maple Ave.
Ridgewood, NJ 07450

SEND US A NOTE!

The next issue of *Dialogue* will focus on interactive writing in content area instruction. You may not be able to write a whole article, but you may have a thought, an idea, a practice or some research in process, or know about a good article about the subject. Send us a letter or brief note and we will publish it here!

(Learning, cont. from p. 16)

better with sensitivity, risk taking, and time. I had to face uncertainty just as I do each time I pull out a blank piece of paper. Being alert to possibilities helped me discover some of what to do. Much of the rest, like some of a writer's good stuff, came as a surprise. By getting in sync with the students and the situation (Yinger, 1988), I enabled myself to get inside the activity (Dillard, 1987). Then I could work with it, learn from it, and design and invent as I went. Finding the way, like finding the words, was part of the process of learning how to do lit logs. §§

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LEARNING HOW TO STUDY DIALOGUE JOURNALS: A RESEARCHER'S PERSPECTIVE

William P. Bintz
Indiana University

I believe that the following adage is very helpful in conducting educational research: "If you don't know where you're going, you'll never get lost." Over the past year, this adage has been particularly helpful as I collaborated with a teacher and a teacher-researcher on a research project exploring the use of dialogue journals in a first grade classroom. During this time I often felt, but was reluctant to admit, that I didn't know where I was going with this research. I had access to 25 dialogue journals collected over a period of one year and believed that these journals could teach me alot. Unfortunately, I really didn't know what to do with them. I knew I couldn't get any more lost than I already was, so I just persevered.

My interest in this project initially grew out of curiosity; my eventual involvement came by way of invitation. Jill Dillard, the teacher-researcher in this project, is a colleague of mine. She and I have long shared an interest in literature-based reading programs, connections between reading and writing, influences of social context on learning, and reader-response theory. We have been curious, however, about how to link these interests to a practical strategy teachers could use everyday in their classrooms.

One day Jill started talking to me about how she and a fellow teacher were using dialogue journals in a first grade classroom. The more she talked, the more I became interested. Jill was particularly excited about both the quantity and quality of writing the first graders were producing in class. She was less enthusiastic, however, about some of the unexpected problems she and the teacher had encountered trying to implement dialogue journals: i.e., trying to respond daily to 25 different students. We brainstormed about possible alternatives and modifications to the traditional notion of dialogue journals.

For example, we figured that instead of the traditional notion of "written conversations about self-generated topics," dialogue journals could be used to explore how children respond to literature they are reading. I suggested substituting "Literature Response Journals" for dialogue journals and using them as a means to explore not only how first grade children respond to literature, but also how teachers as dialogue partners respond to children. We agreed that exploring this use of dialogue journals would make an interesting action-research project, that Jill would collect the data, and I would support her in data analysis.

At the beginning of the school year, Jill and the teacher made a journal booklet for each student. Then, once a week during a 30-minute block of scheduled reading time, students were invited to write to them about whatever book(s) they were reading at the time, and they would write back. The books the children wrote about were self-selected pieces of literature chosen from home, class, or school libraries.

At the end of the year I decided to analyze 6 of the 25 response journals. Although arbitrary, I felt this number would be manageable, allow an equal number of boys and girls, and provide enough opportunities to see some contrasts. My first problem was, "Now that I have 6 journals to analyze, how do I go about it?" I started by simply asking myself questions about what I wanted to know, that the data might be able to tell me. Throughout this project I had assumed that response journals offered students a variety of learning opportunities. One important opportunity was to learn how to write by actually writing. Therefore, I decided to ask, "Does the amount of student and teacher writing in literature response journals increase, decrease, or remain stable over time?" I soon found out that it essentially did neither.

For starters, I did a word count. All six students combined wrote a total of 2939 words across 125 entries (an average of 23.5 words per entry). The teacher meanwhile wrote a total of 3224 words (Avg. 26.0) across the same number of entries. Moreover, the amount of individual student writing ranged from a low of 407 total words (Avg. 18.5) to a high of 660 total words (Avg. 30.00). The amount of teacher writing ranged from a low of

228 total words (Avg. 10.4) to a high of 697 (Avg. 31.7).

Although the length of student and teacher writing did increase slightly over time, both were erratic, unpredictable, and characterized by peaks and valleys. For example, in one entry a student's response was 1 word, "No!". In another entry his response consisted of 108 words. This pattern was characteristic of teacher writing as well (Low = 7 words; High = 90).

Two important observations emerged from these word counts. First, students who wrote the least were also the ones least written to by the teacher; students who wrote the most were also the ones most written to by the teacher. Second, the type of response the teacher made influenced the length of the response the student wrote. For example, students wrote little in response to teacher writing that was introduced by a personal fact and followed by a closed-ended question; i.e., "I like your story. Which one is the funniest character?" Conversely, students wrote extensively to teacher writing that was introduced by a personal fact and followed by an open-ended question; i.e., "I love book chats. Tell me something about your book."

I wanted, of course, to go beyond word counts as an instrument for analysis. So, following Shuy's (1988) analysis of language functions, I looked at student and teacher writing in terms of the "response functions" they reflected. Overall, students used more, as well as a greater variety of, "response functions" than did the teacher. This was probably due to the fact that much of the teacher writing, especially at the beginning of the year, consisted of asking questions. Student writing served to report general facts (32%); describe personal experiences (17%); answer teacher questions (22%); make personal reactions and comments (13%); and issue evaluative comments (9%). Teacher writing served to ask questions (40%); make evaluative comments (12%); encourage, invite, and support student efforts (11%); react and comment (13%); and affirm and confirm student responses (7%).

Interestingly, the 3 girls seemed more personally involved in this activity than were the 3 boys. For example, the girls included more personal facts (44%) than general facts (38%) in their entries compared with the boys, who included more general (61%) than personal facts (14%).

So far I have only analyzed the 6 journals in terms of word counts and response functions. Now, I want to start re-examining them to try to discover developmental patterns and categories. I have already taken a sneak preview. That preview has indicated that at the beginning of the year students were primarily text-bound; that is, they responded to literature in terms of identifying and understanding single, isolated units, such as the title, the main character, the reason(s) for choosing a book and so on. As the year progressed, however, student responses reflected a sense of going beyond the book they were reading. They started making connections between characters and actions from previous books; making evaluations of books, book titles, and specific characters; making predictions and referring to specific prediction strategies; and making recommendations and invitations about specific books to other students.

One caveat about my approach to the research is in order. Analyzing the journals strictly from a researcher's perspective, as opposed to a teacher's or teacher-researcher's perspective, has been frustrating. Throughout this project I have been an outsider to the context in which these dialogue journals were written. Consequently, my view is a decontextualized one, and therefore limited. What is important now is for Jill, the teacher, and I to conduct an analysis together. It is imperative that these dialogue journals, which were written in a context, be analyzed in a context. I look forward to that opportunity.

For now, though, I feel safe in knowing several new things about dialogue journals. I know, for instance, that they support children in learning how to better read and write. I know that they facilitate low-risk environments, and allow for peaks and plateaus in learning. And, I know that they invite social learning and collaboration. But, most importantly perhaps, is that I know dialogue journals offer teachers a potential for dramatically changing how they see their students as well as how they see themselves as life-long learners.

What I don't feel safe in knowing, however, is whether students would dialogue in the same manner with other students about literature, how dialogue journals support teachers and students in creating a community of readers and

(Bintz, continued from p. 19)

writers, how teachers and researchers collaborate on research projects, and even why teachers and researchers should collaborate. To answer these questions, I guess it's time to get lost with my collaborators in these dialogue journals. §§

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** See also articles in past issues of ***Dialogue***. **

DIALOGUES BETWEEN DEAF AND DEAF EDUCATION STUDENTS

Ann K. Lieberth
Texas Christian University

Recently, there has been heightened awareness in the United States of the need to develop basic literacy skills. The development of functional reading and writing skills has always been a challenge to educators of the deaf and hard of hearing (subsequently referred to as "deaf"), whose students have traditionally experienced problems and delays in reading and writing. However, while instruction for the deaf has concentrated on developing spoken or signed language and reading in addition to academic subjects, writing skills have received little formal instructional time. This is unfortunate, since the ability to communicate in writing may be the most effective or the only way to communicate with hearing people.

In an attempt to assist in developing the writing skills of deaf children, as well as to prepare teachers-in-training to teach writing to these students, the following cooperative project was designed and initiated. Nine 10-12 year old deaf students, enrolled in a school for the deaf, were randomly paired with nine college undergraduate students majoring in deaf education to interact in dialogue journals for a twelve-week period. The participants did not meet each other until the completion of the project, so all their communication occurred in writing. At the beginning of the project, the deaf students were asked to watch and write about an episode of the "Ghostbusters" cartoon show, which provided a written language sample that the undergraduates analyzed using the Myklebust Picture Story Test (Myklebust, 1965). After analyzing the language samples, the undergraduates targeted areas of language use needing remediation or development. During the twelve weeks of writing, they were aware of the language needs they had identified and made a specific attempt to model those aspects of their writing in entries, along with a correct model of any other incorrect language usage that was evident.

Examination of the journals throughout the twelve-week period indicated that both groups of students worked at communicating, and showed increased confidence and ability to communicate in writing. At the end of the twelve weeks, the deaf students were asked to view and write a summary of another episode of "Ghostbusters," and the language samples were again formally analyzed. A comparison of the samples before and after the project indicated reduced frequency of grammatical and spelling errors, increased use of correct punctuation, increased sentence length, and increased intelligibility. Improvements in writing were noted by the classroom teacher in the children's other work as well. In addition, the undergraduates demonstrated the ability to identify errors on a language sample, target aspects of written language for modeling, and plan and implement strategies for informally teaching writing.

The results of this study have shown that dialogue journal writing between paired deaf elementary students and undergraduate students majoring in deaf education can provide benefits for both groups of participants, as well as the classroom teacher. The deaf students' reading and writing skills developed as they worked to make themselves understood and to clarify what their partner did not understand. The undergraduate students had the opportunity to practice "teaching" writing. They had to find ways to promote more writing than yes/no answers, but at the same time stay within the language capabilities of the children. They had to model correct language usage without disrupting the dialogue. The classroom teacher was freed from spending time writing to each student, and could document their progress by reviewing the dialogue entries.

This project is being continued at the request of both groups of participants. In addition, a similar project is being initiated with younger deaf and hard of hearing children who are beginning writers, to assess the effects of dialogue journal writing on the development of their language skills. §§

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NEW PUBLICATIONS

Writing with reason: The emergence of authorship in young children. Nigel Hall (Ed.). London: Hodder & Stoughton. 1989.

This brand new book about very young children's (as young as 3 and 4 years old, in a nursery class) development as authors in literacy-rich classrooms is delightful and provocative. The chapters are all written by classroom teachers who provided opportunities for children to write authentically, for real audiences and real purposes. They studied their children's writing development as they carried out their normal teaching duties, and present here case studies of various aspects of these young children's emerging authorship.

Three of the chapters are about interactive writing, in dialogue journals and letters. In one chapter ("The ladybird letters"), a nursery school teacher shows that although 3- and 4-year-old children lack many conventional literacy skills, they do not need to be prevented from engaging in the serious production of print. Given the opportunity to engage in a written dialogue with a ladybird they had read about, the children entered in enthusiastically and corresponded for 6 weeks, using a combination of drawing and writing.

The other two chapters ("Young letter writers as authors" and "Dear Mrs. Duffy") show children who are a little older (around 5 years old) working eagerly and effectively to make their meanings in writing clear, becoming equal participants with their teacher in the dialogue, and gradually finding their own voices in their writing.

The many examples of children's writing provided in each of the chapters are not only entertaining and illustrative, but allow readers to do their own analysis and draw their own conclusions about the writing.

* * *

Dialogue journal writing with first graders.

Margaret Maguire has just finished a 6-month study of the dialogue journal writing of 18 first grade children (both native and nonnative English speakers) and their teacher in a Montreal inner city school. Her research report is entitled simply "An analysis of dialogue journal writing." The analysis focuses on language functions and cohesive ties, and there are plenty of examples of the children's writing.

Some of the findings of the study were:

- By the end of the project, writing had become a natural form of communication for these children. All had positive attitudes toward writing at the end of the study and believed that they could write.
- The children whose native language is not English performed as well in the journals as those children who were native English speakers.
- The overall approach to the writing and the teacher's response style influenced the complexity and coherence of the language produced by the children. There was an increase in entries, language functions, and cohesive ties when the children generated their own topics. There was a decrease in entries, language functions and cohesive ties during one period of the study, when a substitute teacher responded to the dialogue journals by correcting the written texts. When the most frequent mode of response used by the teacher was asking questions, the most frequent language function expressed by the children was responding to those questions.
- The dialogue journal can play a major facilitative role in children's written language development, which includes reading and writing. First grade children, as demonstrated by those in this inner city school, can begin to write independently much earlier than has been traditionally assumed.

To get a copy of the report, send $12 (U.S.) to:

Conseil scolaire de l'île de Montréal, Montréal, CANADA

Where Do I Get It?

In our last issue we reviewed a book chapter by James Britton that includes a section about dialogue journal writing and we inadvertently neglected to give adequate information for obtaining it.

"Writing and reading in the classroom," will appear in *Writing and reading: Collaboration in the classroom*. Anne Haas Dyson (Ed.), to be published by the National Council of Teachers of English in 1989.

Dialogue *is the newsletter about the uses, benefits, and theory of dialogue journals and other forms of communicating in writing about topics of mutual interest through continuous, functional conversations between (usually) learners and teachers. This newsletter provides an informal means of sharing information, ideas and concerns among those who are using dialogue journals and other interactive writing and studying their uses in the United States and in other countries. It is an outgrowth of two National Institute of Education research grants to study dialogue journal writing with native and non-native English speakers. The newsletter is now produced with partial support from the Center for Applied Linguistics. For information about dialogue journal research and practical applications or the work of CAL, write:*

DIALOGUE, CAL
1118 22nd St., N.W. Washington, DC 20037.

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The Newsletter about Dialogue Journals
Vol. VI No. 2, September 1989

> *The world needs real dialogue. The only possible dialogue is the kind between people who remain what they are and speak their minds.*
>
> — *Albert Camus*

DIALOGUE IN CONTENT AREA INSTRUCTION: PROMISE AND PRACTICE

Dialogue journals are accepted and praised for the personal communication they provide teacher and student and for the functional language experience they provide, but many teachers are uncertain about their potential for the mutual construction of knowledge in content areas. At the elementary level, dialogue journals easily provide rich opportunities for discussions of classroom topics. But in subject classes at secondary levels, or wherever students and teachers meet only a few hours a week, many teachers have been concerned about whether dialogue journals would contribute to learning as well as to student-teacher understanding.

This issue examines the use of dialogue journals in various areas of instruction: science, social studies, math, linguistics, and foreign languages. It reflects a search for ways to engage every student in active discussion of the concepts and skills being learned.

The contributors to this issue describe the promise and benefits of dialogue journals in content area classes, especially math and science, and focus on the practical problems of using them. Kessler and Rose both suggest combining the traditional open-topic approach with a more directive format. Little and Seidenstein found that the dialogue journals enhanced and focused their teaching of elementary math and high school physics, respectively. Based on her research on dialogue journal use in a high school math class, Andrews provides valuable suggestions for increasing the effectiveness of dialogue journals at the secondary level.

Steffensen/Lin and Steer stress the value of dialogue journals for interesting students in courses which are "difficult" and "boring." Steer says her students' dialogue journals become "the seedbed from which other, more public writing will emerge." Dolly questions how to ensure that most students do discuss course topics and concepts, without making the dialogues repetitive and boring to read.

Martin demonstrates how dialogue journals adapt to foreign language students' widely varying proficiency levels. Maguire shows how dialogue journals can bring even severely learning disabled students into the world of knowledge.

One unresolved issue is how dialogues can retain a mixture of the personal topics of interest to individual students, and the more general concerns and issues which teachers need and want to discuss. We remind teachers again that dialogue journals work best when *both* partners bring up topics of interest, so even in less directive formats teachers can and should use the opportunity to discuss the content area topics. As we see it, dialogues in specific subject areas are not just a "nice thing to do if there's time," but an essential part of the process of acquiring knowledge. Without such dialogues in some form — oral or written, students cannot become active participants in constructing knowledge which is truly theirs.

One could argue that the goal of education is to help individuals integrate personal and trans-personal or "objective" knowledge. In this integration, one's direct experience gains increasingly powerful and far-reaching meanings, and the knowledge one acquires about the world and its tasks is increasingly made personal and one's own. Dialogue journals in content area classes have the potential for engaging students directly in this integration. JS.

INTERACTIVE WRITING IN CONTENT AREAS: A PROMISING PRACTICE FOR ALL LEARNERS

Carolyn Kessler
University of Texas at San Antonio

In an entry in her dialogue journal, Irma, a third grader acquiring English as a second language, wrote:

> *I like dialogue jurnals becuse it is fun. It is useful because I get to tell what things that I don't want other people to know. And to talk but on paper. We can also express felings and thoughts. Dialogue jurnales are also importined for information. It helps us solve problems that we miyt have. Dialogue jurnals are very useful.*

Irma had a good understanding of the value of interactive writing with her teacher in a dialogue journal (DJ). She knew that partnerships can be formed as each participates in the development of the dialogue. She came to know and trust her teacher on a personal level, forming that special rapport which allows for the expression of feelings and thoughts. But Irma also saw the dialogue journal as a medium for learning new things and for clarifying concepts she didn't understand well. She pointed this out in her observation that the DJs are important for information and problem-solving. In a later entry, Irma wrote:

> *...I would like to be learning about the world and how people on it befor we did and what kind of animals there was on earth. Also I would like to learn about dinsourse.*

To this entry, Irma's teacher responded:

> *The history of man is fascinating. You'll be learning more about that in middle school and high school. What I can do in class is bring a timeline that shows what has happened since man has been on earth.*
> *...We talked about dinosaurs in Science, remember? I have some material on other dinosaurs that we can do. Thanks for your ideas, Irma!*

For second language learners of English the dual task of acquiring a new language *and* learning new concepts in content areas is, to say the least, formidable. Nevertheless, ESL teachers are now recognizing that interactive writing can help the simultaneous acquisition of English and content-area concepts.

What has become clear in my experience with interactive writing in dialogue journals is that students enjoy the chance not only to interact privately with their teacher but also to use this medium to learn school content. Close examination of numerous DJs in which students can select their own topics reveals that they frequently select topics from content areas — everything from asking about adverbs and predicates to the history of the human race. The interactive writing afforded by the DJ can be a very useful source of information and of solutions to problems, just as Irma observed. The forms that interactive writing in content areas can take are as open as the imagination and creativitiy of the teacher.

One form of interactive content-area writing is what we call a Think and Write Journal (TWJ). A fifth-grade team of ESL and content area teachers are exploring its use with heterogeneous classes of native and non-native speakers of English, in addition to the regular open-ended DJ. These two types of interactive journals serve complementary purposes. The free-flowing, informal, non-evaluated DJ allows for student topic selection and serves to establish and maintain those special relationships between teacher and student that keep the affective filter down and facilitate learning processes. The TWJ, which is also written dialogue, focuses on a specific content area. With this particular teacher team, students keep TWJs in science and social studies. Topics for the TWJs are finely tuned to units of study just completed. Giving a very specific topic with a specified format eventually enables learners to generate an essay of at least three paragraphs without access to the textbook or other resources. The format asks for a summary in the first paragraph to indicate overall understanding of the topic. The second paragraph requires reflection on what more the learner would like to know about the topic or what part was best-liked. The third asks for specification of the least understood part of the topic.

Implementing the TWJ takes time. The cognitive, reflective thinking needed for effective "think and write" develops gradually. Learners deal not only with comprehension of a topic, but with analysis, synthesis and evaluation — challenging tasks for all learners. An early entry about the American Revolution in the social studies TWJ of ESL student Anita illustrates some of the difficulties she had getting started.

> *I learned waht the Revolutan was about. and how the cottin gin was working.*
>
> *The part I liked the best was whene we had the revolutan and went free and had freedom and liverty. even if I don't undersand it.*
>
> *I didn't undersand why we brock away from grait brente.*

Responding to Anita's comments, the teacher wrote:

> *The United States broke away from Great Britain so that we could be free and independent. We didn't want Great Britain to tell us what to do.*

This interaction gave Anita the opportunity to write about her studies, even though her proficiency in English was very limited. At the same time, she received information about the "why" of the American Revolution, and the correct spelling of Great Britain. She was learning concepts about U.S. history at the same time that she was learning to express herself in English.

Unlike the open-ended dialogue journals, the TWJs are evaluated for completeness and accuracy in dealing with concepts, using a simple √+ for outstanding, √ for satisfactory, and √- for incomplete or incorrect. This serves to correct any serious misconceptions about the content, but does not affect the course grade. Students look forward to this feedback, and typically those with other than √+ want to read and discuss the top entries. This kind of cooperative interaction gradually leads to better writing from all learners. The evaluation of Anita's first attempt, above, was √. Clearly, she was not yet able to use writing easily to express her understanding of the topic nor to reflect on what more she would like to know about the American Revolution. But she had started the process.

In the following TWJ science entry after a unit on electricity, later in the year, the effects of interacting with others and helping one another learn are evident in the writing of bilingual Diana:

> *I have learned that you use electricity in many ways. You use electricity at home and in school. Also in facteries. You use electricity in many different places. To be useful, electricity must be changed to other kinds of energy. Electricity is also an important source of light and heat. ...Each day amounts of energy or electrical energy are used in homes, schools, and offices. You use a certain amount of electricity when you watch television for an hour. You use a different amount when you read for 2 hours by the light of a lamp....*
>
> *I liked the best part when we get to do expiernment's from the book. I liked it because you get more fun and could rememember and learn something.*
>
> *I didn't understand when the battery had the nail and the nail got hot and it couldn't pick up the paper clip. We did that again, then it worked. But how come it got hot and why is the nail picking up the paperclip the second time and not the first time I did that?*

This entry demonstrates considerable writing fluency and accuracy as well as a good grasp of concepts about electricity. And with ease Diana can ask her teacher about something she didn't understand, knowing she will receive an answer. For the teacher, TWJs provide a means for discovering gaps in student knowledge and for responding with clarifications in a non-threatening form.

A variation of the TWJ is to integrate it with a cooperative learning model, using peer-peer interaction in either spoken or written form, before the journal is given to the teacher. This variation taps many of the factors that facilitate second language acquisition: genuine discourse, meaningful contexts, student-student interaction,

Coming up! A Day of Interactive Writing, NCTE Annual Convention
Tuesday, November 21, 1989, Baltimore, Maryland
"Interactive writing with ESL students: Building confidence and language fluency and developing literacy"

This day-long workshop will:

- Outline the theoretical basis for and benefits and essential qualities of interactive writing for promoting students' language acquisition and writing development
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Resource manuals, bibliographies, and articles will be available.

The workshop leaders have extensive experience using and studying interactive writing at different grade levels, from early elementary to college: Joy Kreeft Peyton, Jana Staton, JoAnn Mackinson, and Diane Thompson. For registration information write to: NCTE Convention, 1111 Kenyon Road, Urbana, IL 61801.

(Interactive, cont. from p. 3)

affective encouragement, self-confidence, risk-taking, development of higher cognitive levels, integration of oral and written modalities, student control of learning, and student generation of knowledge — factors which, in fact, help all learners.

A content-area journal in math for a third-grade ESL learner shows interaction of these factors when Francisco writes:

> *Today I learn that a cube has flat face. an a cube has 12 straight eges. an a cube has eight corner. dove a cube have a curbed?*

And the teacher responds,

> *Francisco, I can tell that you already know a lot about cubes. I am very pleased. Let's look at our cube and find out if it is curved or not.* (Response includes a graphic of a cube.)

After working with a model of a cube, Francisco writes in his journal:

> *Today we did a model of a cube it was fun. An a cude does not have curved.*

A writer's creation of a text draws on the interaction of conceptual and linguistic knowledge as well as affective responses. For Francisco, as for other learners at all levels of English language proficiency, native and non-native speakers, these factors interplay to foster language and cognitive development when learners engage in writing for an audience.

Interactive writing — genuine, meaningful written discourse — is a powerful way to integrate content areas and second language acquisition. From the literature on writing across the curriculum, process writing, and a whole language approach for native speakers of English we have strong evidence that writing is a means of learning. We can expect the same principles to hold for ESL learners. Empowering learners for academic success necessarily brings together content areas and genuine writing, for they are intrinsically connected. §§

[I would like to express my gratitude to Valerie Camilli and Rita Garcia, the teacher team at Southwest Independent School District, San Antonio, Texas, who piloted the TWJ with their fifth graders as well as ESL and content area teachers Anita Herrera and Brigitte Deyle of the Northside Independent School District, San Antonio]

A ROLE FOR INTERACTIVE WRITING IN ALL CLASSES?
FACING UP TO SOME PROBLEMS

Martha R. Dolly
Frostburg State University

As each new semester draws near, I ponder how to incorporate dialogue journal writing into my classes, or whether to use it at all. Research (Markman, 1983) and personal experience convince me of its value in improving students' attitudes toward writing, if not their writing itself, yet I have encountered several discouraging problems. Each time I try a new strategy to solve one problem, a new one crops up. I suspect that similar problems occur in using dialogue journals in content area classes as well, and perhaps there are ways of addressing them that I have so far overlooked.

Of the six semesters I have used dialogue journal writing in freshman composition, the first was the most successful. The students' entries, which were to deal primarily with concerns about writing, revealed some of their fears and misconceptions that I probably could not have discovered any other way. One young lady's mother had instilled in her a deep fear that her essays in college were likely to fail because they were too short. Another student asked me in the journal to help him with his need for perfection, which was blocking his further writing. (*"In answer to your comment..., I do feel that I need to have a great Intro to go on with my paper. What can I do to prevent this feeling, or get around it?"*) I wondered if this misconception might explain why Mike's essays tended to "fizzle out." Without the journal, it might have taken me much longer to discover that he was worrying over his introductions to the point of being unable to develop his essays. The dialogue journal thus gives students an opportunity to record concerns as they arise and guarantees them a response to issues that they may never have the occasion to bring up in class or even in their regular writing conferences with me.

I'm so convinced of its value for helping students resolve worries and misconceptions about writing that I'm loath to discard it, yet I'm not ready to return to the original, traditional dialogue journal format.

The problem that first semester was that so many students brought up the same issues that I found myself trotting out the same principles, suggestions, and reassurances over and over. At least half a dozen students lamented their lack of confidence in their writing, even more requested advice on overcoming writer's block, and a dozen or more wanted to know how they could better express their thoughts in writing. Even though no two responses are ever identical, making the same points time after time can become tiresome. I found after the first month or so that I was not enjoying these exchanges the way I had those with my ESL students, whose entries were not limited to writing concerns and covered everything from marketing chopsticks to avoiding arranged marriages. Covering the most common problems and concerns in composition class rather than responding to them in the students' journals was not the answer. Students benefit more from discussing an issue at the time it is introduced rather than waiting.

I experimented with having students bring their journals to each writing conference, beginning the session by discussing orally a concern with writing the student had identified in the journal. In theory this should work well, because the teacher immediately responds to the student's concern and seeks clarification and elaboration where necessary. The oral inter-

(Role, continued from p. 5)

DIALOGUE JOURNALS IN MATHEMATICS COURSES

Barbara Rose
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Using dialogue journals to support the learning of mathematics can benefit the student as writer, the teacher as reader, and the student-teacher interaction in the classroom. Because of the highly symbolic nature of mathematics, many students strive to memorize, plug new numbers in old formulas, and negotiate the "product" without internalizing the process. In addition, the affective aspects of mathematics learning are often overlooked in this discipline that many erroneously regard as objective yet mysterious.

An exciting entrée to an internalized, personalized, making-of-meaning approach to learning mathematics is through dialogue journals. Consider the following scenario I have used in a variety of college mathematics courses.

After I distribute spiral-bound notebooks to the students on the first day of class, along with a sheet explaining the rationale and procedures for journals, I discuss the two kinds of writing to be done in them. On the right-hand pages, the students are to write spontaneous entries outside of class. This writing is left unstructured: I encourage students to write about how they feel about mathematics, the class, the teacher, the textbook, tests, or about specific concepts covered. They can also summarize, write definitions in their own words, ask questions, or take a problem they can't solve and write about it, show what they have done so far, and try to talk their way through the problem. Since students often complain about not having anything to say, I provide an optional list of topics. In addition, I suggest that students write entries before and after each test, responding to their preparation for and feelings about each test and errors they have made.

The left-hand pages are reserved for freewriting exercises in class. These focused writing activities are in response to a question or topic that I pose, and generally relate to the particular mathematics content being studied. *At the beginning of class*, I might ask students to write for several minutes on topics such as: What still bothers me about solving related rates; What was my biggest problem with the homework?; Summarize the process of finding the

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action makes up for the lack of a written record of the teacher's comments, and discussing a problem such as "getting started" six or eight times is less tedious than writing about it. However, my students wrote shorter and less significant entries in these "conference journals" than they had when the interaction was carried on entirely in writing. I suspect that they saw no reason to write what they could say when they arrived for the conference. If I wasn't going to write to them, why should they write to me?

I'm left wondering, as a new term approaches, how to use dialogue writing this time, or whether to use it at all. I'm so convinced of its value for helping students resolve worries and misconceptions about writing that I'm loath to discard it, yet I'm not quite ready to return to the original, traditional dialogue journal format. Perhaps, since no single approach is ideal for all learners, I'll offer students the option of receiving oral or written responses from me. I don't expect to discover any magic formula, but I trust that others' accounts of using dialogue journals in content areas will help me modify and refine my use of interactive writing in teaching composition. §§

REFERENCE

Markman, M. C. (1983). Teacher-student dialogue writing in a college composition course: Effects upon writing performance and attitudes. *Dissertation Abstracts International, 45*, 1670A.

(Dialogue, cont. from p. 6)

maximum value of a continuous function on a closed interval; What is statistics? (Before starting this unit) How do I feel about the test I took yesterday? What does ___ mean?

When students *end a class* with a short freewrite, they can respond to questions such as: What was the main idea of today's lesson?; What is the muddiest issue in this unit on solving linear equations?; What is the process of integration by parts?; What questions do I have from this lesson?

Freewriting *during class* can refocus students on the material or allow them to express frustrations or ask questions. It can also be used before an exam to clear students' minds, or at any point during class for responses to questions.

I collect the journals regularly and respond to both types of writing. As I researched students engaging in various journal writing tasks, I determined that there are benefits to the student as writer, the teacher as reader, and the classroom due to the student-teacher interaction in dialogue journal writing about mathematics (Rose, 1989).

BENEFITS TO THE STUDENT AS WRITER

- Affect - The writing has a clarifying and empowering effect on students through the expression of and reflection on their feelings about the course, mathematics, and schooling.
- Content Knowledge - It increases the students' technical knowledge of mathematics, by providing better understanding of the material covered in the course and the stimulus for personal inquiry into the subject matter.
- Processes - It improves students' learning skills in mathematics through reflection on the process of doing mathematics.
- Conception - It develops students' *beliefs* about the nature of mathematics and the goals of learning mathematics.
- Writing Skills - It increases the comfort and competence students feel with writing.

BENEFITS TO THE TEACHER AS READER

- The writing provides teachers with a diagnostic tool, by which to become aware of individual needs of their students and be able to respond to them both individually and corporately.
- It produces a record of student development, which can help the teacher evaluate the growth which occurs as a result of the course.
- It supplies feedback on the course which can lead to both short-term adjustments in the course and long-term pedagogical improvement.

BENEFITS DUE TO THE READER-WRITER INTERACTION

- Quality and Quantity of Communication - The private and ongoing dialogue between the teacher and each student builds a more positive relationship between students and teacher individually and results in enhanced classroom communication.
- Personalized atmosphere - Students and teacher grow more accountable to each other and build mutual trust as they come to know each other in a more humanistic way.
- Classroom rapport - As communication and personalization occur, the resulting positive rapport created in the classroom can enhance both personal and academic growth as students and teachers work in a cooperative and caring climate, rather than an impersonal or adversarial one.

Whatever the grade level or content area, writing about the content can work because with every item students write, they construct personal meaning with their language. This is what learning is all about, and it can happen in a mathematics course using dialogue journals. §§

REFERENCE

Rose, B. J. *Using expressive writing to support the learning of mathematics*. Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Rochester.

Barbara Rose has recently published two articles about journal writing in mathematics classes:

Rose, B. J. (1989). Writing and mathematics: Theory and practice. In *The role of writing to teach science and mathematics*. New York, NY: Teacher's College Press.

Borasi, R., & Rose, B. J. (forthcoming, 1989). Journal writing and mathematics instruction. *Educational Studies in Mathematics.*

FIRST-TIME USE OF DIALOGUE JOURNALS IN MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE CLASSES

Cathy Little, Lewisville Independent School District (Texas)
Bennett Seidenstein, Anne Arundel County Schools (Maryland)
Roslynn Seidenstein, California State Polytechnic University
John Madison, State University of New York at Plattsburgh

After using and promoting dialogue journals for many years in our undergraduate and graduate methods courses in teacher education, we (J. Madison and R. Seidenstein) have been interested in getting feedback about them from those we have taught. The feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, and we have been pleased with the growing interest in and pedagogical credibility of interactive writing. However, since writing is perceived as social/language behavior, most of the feedback has been focused on aspects of communication and writing. Since we believe that interactive writing can be effective for *all* classroom teachers, we were particularly interested in responses of teachers using dialogue journals in the areas of mathematics and science. Cathy Little, a fourth grade teacher and Ben Seidenstein, a high school science teacher, provided us with some interesting and useful insights about their first-time experiences with "dialoguing" in these subject areas.

DIALOGUE JOURNALS IN ELEMENTARY MATHEMATICS

Cathy Little was introduced to dialogue journals in Roslynn Seidenstein's graduate mathematics methods courses and had journaled with her students in an undergraduate mathematics methods course. In her fourth grade classroom, Little found that when students wrote about mathematics, their entries expressed personal likes and dislikes regarding math as well as their (mis)understandings about the subject. In Little's opinion, dialogue journals provide a vital link among the teacher, the students, and the content area. The following excerpts are from her fourth graders.

Dear Mrs. Little
I feel great about math. It let's you brain work hard. It's fun. I like it alot. (Ann)

Yo Mrs. Little
I still think math stuped and i still don't like Because laugh at me. Not with me. Because I use my fingers and I make a lot of eighties and seventies and the tangrames a pretty cool and your real nice. (Kevin)

Mrs. Little
I have finally got what mult. is two factors that equal a product. And I think division is two numbers that equal a quotient and they sometimes have a remainder.
Me and my mom studied these. (Note: I did not look these up.) (Terri)

Dear Mrs. Little,
Yes, it is that we are working on the base ten blocks and writing on paper at the same time. Now do you understand what I mean. I understand division and I understand base ten blocks too. But when they get together I don't understand them. And that is what I mean. Your student, Terri

Little found the use of dialogue journal writing to be her most effective tool in the mathematics classroom for assessing student performance, understanding of content and concepts, and getting feedback on her teaching.

DIALOGUE JOURNALS IN SECONDARY SCIENCE

After many discussions with his sister, Bennett Seidenstein became interested in the possibility of using dialogue journals in his "hard-to-teach" high school physical science classes. Many of the students were enrolled in these courses to fulfill a requirement or because it was perceived as an easy course.

Upon examining the journal entries, Seidenstein found that they fell into three general categories. The above-average students seemed to understand the purpose for the journal and used the opportunity to do reflective writing and to communicate personally with Ben about course material. The average students struggled both with the concepts and material of the course and with the idea of journal writing. Their entries demonstrated attempts to write reflectively, but many were superficial. The below-average and unmotivated students wrote very brief statements regarding course content and rarely made comments on the personal level.

At the end of October, Seidenstein asked his students the following questions:

1. How has the journal helped/not helped so far in this course?
2. Are you using the journal to its fullest potential?
3. What question(s) do you have about what we are studying now?

The following are some samples of responses to these questions.

Jackie (below-average group):

Well about this journal I could care less what we do. I will do it, because I need a good grade in your class and all the rest so I can get my license and a car.... How could you possibly make use of atomic theory to explain something in the future. I dont really know what your talking about. I was absent that day.

Verna (above-average group):

The journal helped my grade alot because I really didn't do well on the last test. I use the journal by answering the questions as best I can and hopefully that's what you mean by this question. (Later) How did scientists come up with naming three types of radiation? Why are the elements over 82 all radioactive? What's the difference between fission and fusion?

Jason (moved from below-average to above-average group):

I thought the sodium and water experiment was really cool! I hope we do more experiments like this.... I think I'm possibly a little more aware of substances in my environment, like in household items and stuff. I did enjoy hearing about acids and bases though. We should do more experiments with acid. (Still later) It's [the journal] helped me let you know how I feel about this class and its activities. Its helped me to understand some things, too!

Despite mixed results in the writing and student reactions, Seidenstein believes that interacting with his students in the journals afforded him more opportunities to build self-image and develop world views than he otherwise would have had. Many students demonstrated deeper thinking in their journals than in their other classwork. Even the below-average student in the example shown responded with an intelligent, challenging question. Others took risks in writing and communicated a new belief in their ability to succeed. Students who had never engaged in personal interactions with a high school teacher developed close personal relationships for the first time. Those who were frequently disruptive ceased their negative behavior, and "discipline" improved.

CONCLUSION

As first-time users of dialogue journals, Little and Seidenstein found that their teaching was enhanced and more focused. Students in their classrooms "discovered" that their teachers were concerned with more than content, skills and low-level facts. Both the teachers and the students reported that writing was a valuable addition to these subject areas. §§

DIALOGUE JOURNALS IN HIGH SCHOOL FRESHMAN ALGEBRA

Sharon E. Andrews
Education Department, Augustana College
Sioux Falls, South Dakota

Both math achievement and attitudes toward mathematics on the part of American students have recently received renewed attention by national education groups and the press. Based upon the assumption that writing about math content can promote learning, I have been studying the use of dialogue journals in a high school freshman algebra classroom.

I was interested in determining if writing in dialogue journals would affect the students' learning of content or affect their attitudes toward mathematics. My interest in using dialogue journals in math classes clearly stems from my own experience teaching high school algebra.

After gaining the cooperatin of a high school mathematics teacher, I selected two Algebra I classes as experimental and control groups. I met with both classes to explain the project and answer questions, then initiated dialogues with one class after the Christmas break. Although I wasn't in the classroom every day, our dialogues continued for over three months, exchanging journals twice a week.

Unlike most studies, in which the dialogue partner has been the classroom teacher, I chose to become the dialogue participant in order to keep the journal experience from influencing instruction in the experimental classroom through teacher bias.

The two groups received identical instruction from the same teacher; homework assignments, quizzes, tests and classroom activities were kept the same for both groups throughout the study. Students could not be randomly assigned, however.

The dialogue journals were kept in the classroom in a portable crate. Students wrote in their journals during class time, usually at the end of the period, and I picked up and returned the journals at the end of the regular school day.

I encouraged students to write about the course content through my questions and comments, but in keeping with the dialogue journal approach, I conversed with them on a wide variety of other topics as well. I haven't completed the topic analysis of the dialogues, but it was clear that most students did not write much about their math class — perhaps because the class size was small (16 students) and access to the teacher was physically and psychologically available. Most students did not express much difficulty with math in their journals.

As outcome measures, I developed a criterion-referenced test (CRT) based on the three chapters in the students' text that were to be covered during the period of the dialogue and used a Mathematics Attitudes Inventory (Sandman, 1979), which uses a 4-point Likert scale to assess students' attitudes toward mathematics. The MAI measures perception of the mathematics teacher, anxiety toward mathematics, value of mathematics in society, self-concept in mathematics, enjoyment of mathematics, and motivation in mathematics. Both classes were pretested using the CRT and MAI in January and post-tested in May. I also asked the students in the experimental class to complete an opinion questionnaire about their reactions toward using the dialogue journals in this content area.

The class in which the dialogue journals were kept gained almost twice as much on their criterion-referenced test scores as the control group. The gains did not quite approach statistical significance, but the trend was very strong. No differences in attitude were detected; however, both classes were at or above the norms for the MAI on the pre-test, and much change would not be predicted.

One clear finding is that having an "outsider" initiate and maintain dialogue journals with high school students worked very well. I had planned to do the dialogues for only 9 weeks, but the students' interest and willingness to continue even though they didn't know me except through our dialogues was great, and I was able to continue until May.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This study is one of the first to look at dialogue journals as a learning tool in a content-area classroom. More needs to be done to investigate their potential to function as a learning/teaching strategy. I can make some recommendations for future research using dialogue journals in high school content areas.

1. Such studies need to be conducted on a full semester or year-long basis. The process of building up rapport takes time. The rapport between myself and the students was building quite nicely and most students had just begun to feel free to question me when the project concluded.

2. If the researcher, rather than the classroom teacher is the writing partner, the researcher should be present in the classroom in some teaching function, enabling more awareness of the content area and issues. The researcher could then structure entries to correspond to content-area concerns and encourage the exchange to take on a more academic nature. If the researcher were in the classroom, he/she would be able to have more control over the length and frequency of the time given to the dialogue writing, which in my study sometimes got shortchanged due to many other pressures.

3. A possible solution to the problem of getting students to write about content-area concerns without destroying the essence of the dialogue journal would be to create a hybrid between traditional and dialogue journals. Teachers could specify that certain entries relate to academic concerns, while at other times the dialogue could be left open to either academic or personal concerns.

As a former high school teacher, I would have welcomed this opportunity to get to know my students better and to offer them an avenue to express themselves to me in private. The time I spent responding to students varied, but I never spent more than an hour completing the task, and it was an activity I looked forward to and enjoyed. I believe there lies a great potential withian the dialogue journal to function as a learniang strategy for students. By its very nature the dialogue journal is a comfortable, natural form of comunication and its flexible characteristics make it adaptable by any teacher in any subject area. §§

Andrews, Sharon E. J. Dialogue Journals as a Learning Tool in High School Freshman Algebra. Doctoral dissertation, University of South Dakota, Vermilion, SD , 1989.

[Editor's note: Because Andrews separated the effects of an interactive written dialogue from its possible influences on the teacher as participant, her study contributes toward understanding the relationship between dialogue journal use and improvements in student achievement or attitudes — clearly a major issue for content area studies. It is possible that the effect of dialogue journals on student performance (measured as a group) occurs largely through enhanced feedback to the teacher about the effectiveness of instructional strategies and about individual student differences and needs, rather than being a function of engagement in interactive writing itself. Another study might be done, in which an outside researcher would be the dialogue partner for one class, and the classroom teacher the partner for a second class in the same content area, to explore more carefully the role of the teacher as a mediating factor in the dynamics of the dialogue journal process.]

"SPEAKING OF FIREBALLS": THE PLAYING FIELDS OF THE MIND

Jana Staton
Center for Applied Linguistics

The mind is a theatre of simultaneous possibilities, a wise man once said. By 10 or 11 years of age, children have minds of awesome power. Not yet absorbed by the emotional and social complexities of adolescence or the harsher realities of adulthood, minds at this age are unfettered, able to race through the stars and find connections for the first time. It is an ideal time for speculating, asking questions, predicting - all those cognitive functions whiach are crucial to mastering world knowledge.

Ben was a tall, quiet boy of 12 in 1981 in Leslee Reed's classroom, originally from the Philippines. Even though he had acquired a good command of English in his three years of American schooling, he never volunteered to speak in class. If asked a direct question, he answered with one word. Even in an individual interview, he became speechless and had to leave. Face-to-face encounters were simply too painful for him, perhaps because of ingrained shyness, or perhaps he thought, like many other bright children, that the torrent of thoughts in his head would not come out right if he spoke, or that his lengthy, excited monologues would not fit into the casual back-and-forth of conversation and classroom interactions. He often spent his morning recess in the classroom, avoiding an overcrowded playground and playing instead with ideas in his mind.

What Ben needed - what everyone needs at some time in life - was the opportunity for his mind to roam freely, yet be heard and have someone listen to him and share his ideas and enthusiasm. A private dialogue, with the opportunity to write as much as he wanted about the thoughts spinning in his head, was ideal for him.

MAKING CONNECTIONS

Ben's earliest entries in the fall of 1980 were focused on his personal world - family, weekend visits to his uncle's and grandmother's homes, his family's musical talents. At the same time, he was trying to find out as much as possible about Mrs. Reed, comparing her life to his own.

October 3, 1980
Ben: *How long have you ben here in California, Mrs. Reed? I've been here two years and 11 months. My mother, my sister and me need only 28 days. So when it's already Hallowine, we'll be here 3 whole years. Have a good weekend, Mrs. Reed.*

Mrs. Reed: *I'm glad you are in California so I can be your teacher! I came to California in 1941. How long ago is that?*

October 6, 1980
Ben: *So you've been here 39 years. My dad has been here for eight years. He left in the Philippines when I was 4 or 5. How was your week ends? Mine was dull.*

This personal focus established a first level of friendship and the rights to discuss topics of personal interest. For many students in this class, this level was enough, and the rest of the year's dialogue continued as a discussion of more personal matters. But for Ben, whose mind had already begun making connections between the "here and now" world of family, school and friends and the larger world "out there," the ongoing dialogue became an opportunity to explore and strengthen the conections between himself and the world, to find the personal bridge to becoming part of that world.

Thus, there were entries in the fall about the movie "Chariots of the Gods," some lizard eggs he found, the birth of kittens to his cat, fires in the mountains around Los Angeles, and the outcome of the presidential election.

PLAYING WITH IDEAS

Unlike some other students in this class, Ben needed and wanted to discuss the issues and ideas that came out of the teacher's lessons. One topic out of many in his journal illustrates the opportunities the dialogue provided for developing his interest in and knowledge of a content area. In February, Ben became fascinated with news stories speculating about a "Nemesis" meteorite which may have struck Earth in prehistoric times, causing a sudden, prolonged temperature dropleading to the extinction of dinosaurs. Mrs. Reed may have stimulated his interest by mentioning the newly-publicized theory as part of their study of geography and its relationship to animal adaptation and survival, but Ben was also getting information from TV or newspapers. His mind now crammed full of questions and possibilities, he needed a partner, someone equally interested in earth's history and fate. He also needed to find a way to bring up the topic for discussion, and in this entry, manages to introduce his interest and attract a response.

February 17, 1981
Ben: *...That five days vacations was fast! It seems like yesterday we had the first day off of the five days vacation. It feels like a fire ball passing.*

Speaking of fire balls. Did you listened to the news about a meteor about Earth's size might collide with Earth? They might have figured out about the dinosaurs. They think that a meteor might have clided with Earth a long, long time ago during the dinosaurs time. They think that's going to happen again. But they already know what to do. There going to send a remote control rocket right into the meteor so it wouldn't colide with earth. They I think there going to send the powerful rocket in the whole wide countries or world.

Mrs. Reed: *Yes, I heard about the meteor theory being a good way of explaining what happened to all of the dinosaurs. I'm not worried about getting hit with another meteor!*

By initiating dialogue journals in the first place, Mrs. Reed announced her availability as a dialogue partner, not just for a social conversation, but also as a cognitive and emotional partner. In her first response, above, she shares Ben's interest and enthusiasm about this otpic, but lets him take the lead. She adds more information of her own only later in this next exchange, when the topic of the scientific exploration of space is firmly established.

February 18, 1981
Ben: *I know. There's nothing to worry about. They will think of using rocket. There's a lot of way to destroy those meteor that comes near and skid near Earth. I wonder how many planets did they explored beside Venus and that planet that has a ring Saturn. It was amazing when they discovered that Venus has a ring just like Saturn. Our Scientist today is getting better and better all the time. Pretty soon there going to be all famous and explore planets that never had been explored before in life....*
Mrs. Reed: *...Some of our scientists will become famous because they are learning more and more about space. Saturn has 52 rings - not just one. They've also discovered that some of the rings are braided like a chain!*

Ben: *And it also has two moons traveling at the same time around Saturn. Isn't that right? But there's more than two moons that I now. It's really, really amazing how they discover things like that with modern machines and all. Another planet has a ring too! I forgot what was the name but I know there's one more planet that has ring. What was that name of the planet again, Mrs. Reed? I think the planet is Venus. But I'm not sure. Imagine that. All the time those rings has been around Venus for many, many thousands of years and no one noticed it until 1979 (I think).*

Mrs. Reed: *We need a new reference book on astronomy so we can see which planets have the rings and the moons. All of our old books don't have all of the new information, do they?*

Ben is becoming a scientist in these discussions, trying out the role of one whose intelligence and knowledge may be all that stands between Earth and destruction: "Our Scientist today is getting better and better all the time. Pretty soon there [they're] going to be all famous and explore planets that never had been explored before in life." Mrs. Reed's responses seem to be carefully constructed not to overwhelm him with her own knowledge and wisdom. She adapts her discussions to his level, so that he continues to feel he is knowledgeable and "ahead" of her.

In effect, knowledge provided without invitation, without being in response to a genuine question or interest, can shut off inquiry, even as it fills the mind.

Mrs. Reed often let students tell her of their new-found learning and acclaimed it in response. With a bright student like Ben, whose mind ran to predictions and speculation about what might be as well as what is, she tried to enlarge the field for his mind to roam, through her classroom lessons, special assignments, and in their private dialogues. This "leading on" of the student's mind is marked by her quiet questions: "By the way, what did you think of the polls?" and by her offering more accurate information to supplement his sketchy knowledge: "Saturn has fifty-two rings, not just one. They've also discovered...."

Once Ben had a general framework and had expressed his own ideas and knowledge, she would often "fill in" his gaps in factual knowledge in an unmarked, conversational way. The seemingly nondirective conversational style allowed him to request new information without being exposed as not knowing it before: "What was the name of that planet again, Mrs. Reed?"

THE COGNITIVE DEMANDS OF THE DIALOGUE

The combination in interactive writing of purposeful, heuristic writing and dialogic, responsive structure create cognitive demands on the student to elaborate his/her own thinking, and to become involved in examining the situation from the perspective of another person.

Dialogic writing goes beyond the rather narrow view that language only "reflects" prior thought and thus does not actively contribute to the development of knowledge and reasoning. Meaningful writing about self-selected topics in an interactive context contributes directly to a student's self-knowledge and formation of concepts and principles for understanding the world, because it is an active process of searching for, sharing and incorporating meaning within a functional framework.

Currently, students of human learning are becoming fascinated with the actual mechanisms by which children acquire adult knowledge and thinking abilities. In these mutual interactions between students and teachers, we can observe how children can engage an adult (or a more competent peer or older child) in a dialogic process in order to extend their abilities and acquire new ones.

The perspective of neo-Vygotskian or socio-cultural theory would describe these dialogues as occurring in the child's zone of proximal development - that range of behaviors which the child can produce only in interaction with the assistance of someone more competent. Real learning, it is suggested, can occur only in this zone, based on abilities and strategies and interests the child already has. The teacher assists the child to use already developed abilities in order to organize or connect them into new patterns. §§

Literacy from the Inside Out

by Rachel Martin

A record of one teacher's progress toward making her classroom practice align with her goals. Thoughts on what's working, what isn't, and the questions that remain, which together provide a curriculum development tool for other literacy workers immersed in the same process.

$5.00 (including postage) to:
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302 Arlington Street
Watertown, MA 02172

TIME FOR A CHANGE

Frequently, good friends of **Dialogue** have suggested that this newsletter needed to "grow up" and become a journal, building on the increasing interest in all forms of interactive writring. Until now we have not taken this well-meant advice, cherishing the informality and freedom of a newsletter, and wanting to keep to our original purpose of sharing practical information and research about dialogue journal use. But our own desire for thematic issues, and the increasing quality and length of the articles you send us, obviously moved **Dialogue** well beyond a newsletter in content and size. So it seems that a change is in order.

We haven't given up on the idea of a journal as a "next step" for **Dialogue** [to be called THE DIALOGUE JOURNAL, of course], but that will take some time. In the meantime, we believe that the need for information about dialogue journal use in diverse settings can best be met by a `series of monographs. Here is our current thinking about what these might look like.

- Thematic issues focused on specific areas of use (adult education, family literacy, special education are our first three candidates)
- Open to contributions from readers, much as we have done in **Dialogue**

An initial monograph is already planned on the use of dialogue journals in literacy education for non-native English speaking adults and out-of-school youth. It will be published through CAL in February of 1990, with funding support from CAL's new National Clearinghouse on Literacy Education (an Adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse). We will send out a notice early in 1990 about the monograph's availability to all our current and past subscribers, with information about the entire series.

PLEASE WRITE TO US BY NOVEMBER 15, 1989 IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO CONTRIBUTE DESCRIPTIONS OF DIALOGUE JOURNAL PRACTICE, ISSUES OR PROBLEMS WITH THIS POPULATION.

TO ORDER DIALOGUE AND OTHER PUBLICATIONS

In order to move to this next stage, and to locate support for a possible journal, **this will be the last issue of the Dialogue newsletter in its current form.** Because of its length [and sterling quality], this issue constitutes issues 2 and 3 of Volume VI, completing our sixth volume. We will not accept new subscriptions or renewals for 1990.

The National Clearinghouse on Literacy Education at the Center for Applied Linguistics will take on the task of disseminating available information about dialogue journals. The following materials are available now, free or at cost. Please check those items you wish to order, and send with your name, address and a check PAYABLE TO HANDBOOK PRESS to DIALOGUE, Center for Applied Linguistics, 1118 22nd St., NW, Washington, DC 20037.

FREE:__ Q&A on Dialogue Journals
__ Q&A: Dialogue Journal Writing with Limited-English-Proficient Students
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AT COST: Make checks payable to HANDBOOK PRESS for these items
__ Current Bibliography of published books and articles ($1.00) about Dialogue Journals
__ A Workshop Packet for Teachers: Dialogue Journal Writing with Limited English Proficient Students (Peyton & Staton) ($15.00)
__ Cumulative Back Issues of DIALOGUE (1982-89) [Vols. I & II], plus research history, bibliography, and abstracts of dissertations through 1989 ($25.00)

A RATIONALE FOR STARTING AND MANAGING DIALOGUE JOURNAL WRITING IN THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASS

Carol Ann Pesola, Concordia College
Helena Curtain, Milwaukee Public Schools

Many teachers and researchers in English as a Second Language (ESL), bilingual education, and English language arts have reported positive results from the regular use of dialogue journals in the classroom. These experiences suggest that dialogue journals may also have great potential for the foreign language classroom at all levels, from elementary school through college and university programs.

Essentially, the dialogue journal can be started and maintained in the foreign language classroom the same way it is in other types of classes, and it can be begun very early in the language learning process. However, there are a couple of special considerations that are worth mentioning.

First, the *communicative classroom* provides the best context for dialogue journal writing because most of the elements for authentic communication are already in place. When students have regular experiences in talking about their world and their interests in the foreign language, they are developing the tools they need to express these ideas in written form. If they don't have these opportunities in speaking, it will be very difficult for them to begin communicating freely in writing.

Unlike students in the United States learning ESL, students learning a foreign language are usually not immersed in that language outside of class. The teacher can help to make up for this lack by providing a classroom rich in environmental print and written reinforcement of class activities. For example, the teacher might develop "feelings" vocabulary through a variety of classroom activities, and then post the expressions on a chart for easy reference. If all the objects in the room are labeled in the target language, students have a ready vocabulary reference point when they need it. Phrases that the students might want to use (and that they suggest) such as "When are we going to ____?" can be posted and clearly visible. Other language-rich classroom displays include a daily schedule on the chalkboard, posted classroom rules, experience charts, helper charts, and class-developed graphs and charts. When the teacher introduces the idea of the dialogue journal, she or he can model use of the classroom environment as a source of written language.

Maintaining conversations on paper with over a hundred students may seem to be overwhelming. One way to manage this is to involve a student teacher in the writing as well.

Maintaining conversations on paper with over a hundred students (many foreign language teachers have that many students) may seem to be an overwhelming task, even though the benefits described by teachers who use dialogue journals are very compelling. One way to manage this is to involve a student teacher in the writing as well. Student teachers may be in an ideal position to use dialogue journals, because they usually have less time to get to know each class, and they begin their teaching experience with less of a bond with the class than is usually enjoyed by the classroom teacher.

Alternative journaling partners may also be used. For example, advanced language students might benefit greatly from dialoguing with foreign students who speak the target language. The experience would be culturally useful for the foreign student as well. Students might dialogue with native speakers of the target language in the comunity, especially recent immigrants or senior

SOME PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS FOR DIALOGUE JOURNALS IN THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

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Dialogue journals have been a part of my French II, French I, and Spanish I classes for four years. They provide students with opportunities to use the target language that are not easily or readily provided in daily classroom activities.

In many foreign language classes, students do not have the opportunity to use the target language without being monitored by other students or the teacher for correctness of grammar, word choice, pronunciation, etc. Dialogue journal writing provides them with this opportunity as well as with a model of appropriate language usage in the teacher's writing.

Foreign language students often learn primarily the content of their books, edited and supplemented by their teacher. They have little opportunity to *select* what they will learn or to use the language freely at their own level of proficiency. Since my students can choose their own topics for their journal writing, they can focus their learning on areas in which they are interested. Their use of the target language is not directed by the unit currently being studied or by the pace of the rest of the class, but by their own choice of topic and individual pace. Of course, this may present a challenge for the teacher, since she may have little background knowledge of the topic chosen and may be unfamiliar with the appropriate vocabulary and expressions in the target language (a problem when the teacher is not a native speaker of the target langauge).

There is great individual variation in the amount of language that students internalize from classroom activities and the way they use the language. In the dialogue journal this variation is demonstrated very clearly, as shown in the following two journal entries from French students.

Chère Madame,

Je rentre de Tennessee à 3h du matin sur lundi. À lycee, j'étais très fatigue! Je vais à Tennessee avec ma famille et une amie. Il est difficile aller en vacances parce que nous sommes occupé dans 4-H. Mais j'aime vacances! Est-ce que tu aime musique? Est-ce que tu écoutes la musique americiane? J'aime Phil Collins et Wham. Et toi? Est-ce que tu regardes la télé souvent? J'aime "Moonlighting," "Three's Company," "Days of Our Lives." Et toi? Est-ce que tu as une bonne fois à Chicago? Est-ce que tu fais des achats? Trop de questions? — Jacqueline

[Translation: *I got home from Tennessee at 3:00 in the morning on Monday. At school I was very tired! I went to Tennessee with my family and a friend. It's dif-*

(Rationale, cont. from p. 16) citizens in retirement centers. Senior students might dialogue with freshmen; high school students might dialogue with elementary school children. In these cases younger students form an important bond with older role models, and the bond is linked with learning the foreign language. Older students often take this responsibility very seriously and become more attentive to the quality of the language they use in their journal responses.

The short but impressive history of dialogue journal writing in first and second language classrooms provides foreign language teachers with ample information to draw from as they develop their own adaptations of this open-ended, communicative activity. As the approach is being developed, it will be important to share these experiences so the dialogue journal can become an important and valued tool in the communication-based, proficiency-oriented foreign language classroom. §§

ficult to go on vacation because we're busy in 4-H. But I like vacations! Do you like music? Do you listen to American music? I like Phil Collins and Wham. And you? Do you watch TV often? I like "Moonlighting," "Three's Company," and "Days of Our Lives." And you? Did you have a good time in Chicago? Did you go shopping? Too many questions? — Jacqueline]

Je récel moi liscénse sur vendredi! Je aussi voiture sur le weekend. Pendent les vacances je were à théâtre, et passé avec moi copines. Je aussi allée le bol avec Pierre et autres copines. Comment. Chicago. — Antoinette
[Translation: *I received my license on Friday! I drove the car over the weekend, too. During vacation, I went to the theater with my girlfriends. I also went bowling with Pierre and some other girlfriends. How was Chicago? — Antoinette*]

Jacqueline, a first-year student, was making exceptional progress while Antoinette, a second-year student, had not yet internalized the material taught in the first year. The dialogue journal allows the teacher to adjust to differences as great as these and to vary language usage based on the level of the student, not the class.

Dialogue journals provide those students who may be reluctant to use the target language oraliy in front of their peers with an oportunity to practice in written form. I have frequently been surprised when a quiet student has written very long entries. Sabina, a Spanish I student, rarely talked unless called on, but she did use the Spanish she knew in our journal.

Querida Señorita Martin,
Mi madre y padre dan mi dinero. A veces yo hago diferente trabajo. Yo sego el césped y ayudo con los platos y limpieza.
¿Como estan tu rodilla? ¿Does it todavia duele? En Colorado mi hermano esqui y chocar contra o con un arbol. El lleva un refuerzo mucho tiempo. — Sabina
[Translation: *Dear Miss Martin, My mother and father give me money. Sometimes I do different chores. I cut the grass and help with the dishes and the cleaning. How is your knee? Does it still hurt? In Colorado, my brother was skiing and hit a tree. It took him a long time to get better. — Sabina*]

People use many different strategies when they are learning a foreign language, but their choice of strategies isn't usually apparent from the results of traditional tests. However, the informal writings of the dialogue journal can often give the teacher insight into students' strategies. For example, Jacqueline, shown earlier, used over and over variations of certain structures she was learning. Sabina substituted an English word when she didn't know the Spanish. Elisa, a Spanish I student, below, looked up every word in a dictionary, and the result was some rather strange Spanish that was not understandable at times. With an understanding of what students' strategies are, the teacher can guide those using ineffective strategies toward more effective ones.

Hola,
Como estas? Voluntad tu classify. Mi escuela trabajar es bien exceptuar espanol! Lo es duro para algo de razon. Sobre mi vacaciones yo wasn't apurar casi miedo del cancero. Es Estoy probar por Cheerleading. Nosotros unico "siete" semanas quedar!! Escribe mi pronto. — Tu amiga, Elisa
[Translation: *Hello, how are you? [unclear] My school work is going well, except for Spanish! It's difficult for some reason. During my vacation I wasn't afraid of getting cancer [we had been writing about sunbathing and skin cancer]. I am going to try out for cheerleading. We have only seven weeks left! Write soon. — Your friend, Elisa*]

I have experienced some difficulties in my use of dialogue journals, and I assume that other foreign langauge teachers will face similar ones. Since students are free to write about whatever they choose, some students may use the one-to-one correspondence to discuss serious problems. Entries like these place the teacher in a very difficult situation. They should be confidential so that students feel comfortable writing to the teacher, but the problem may be one that should be discussed with parents or another professional, such as a counselor or nurse. For example, a first-year Spanish student wrote the following entries.

Querida Miss Martin,
Yo prefiere vivir en Columbus. Yo never leer Agatha Christie. mi papa es alcolholico. yo ir Columbus Sabado, visitar mi madre.
Hasta manana
[Translation: *Dear Miss Martin, I prefer to live in Columbus. I never read Agatha Christie. My father is an alcoholic. I am going to Columbus Saturday, to visit my mother. See you tomorrow.*]

Querida Miss Martin,
Mi hermana es home visitar. Ella de Vista, California. Near San Diego. Mayo ocho nosotros ir ver David Copperfield. Tu mucho magico. Yo mucho magico. Yo deseo mi padre desaparecer. Hasta lunes
[Translation: *Dear Miss Martin, My sister is home to visit. She lives in Vista, California, near San Diego. May 8 we are going to go to David Copperfield. Do you like magic? I like magic a lot. I wish my father would disappear. See you Monday.*]

There is really no single right answer to this dilemma, and I think decisions need to be made on a case-by-case basis. I do make a policy, though, to never act on an entry like this without first discussing my reactions and plans with the student.

In a high school situation, deciding who to write with, how often to write, and how students will receive credit for their writing can be difficult. First, because of the large size of most high school foreign language classes, a high school teacher cannot write to all students at the same time. One way to solve this is to write to only some students. For example, if a teacher has several levels of classes, the higher-level students may be required to write regularly, and the lower level students allowed to write only if they choose to. If a teacher has only one language level, he may write with one or two groups of students for a grading period and switch to another one or two groups the next grading period.

Getting grades and receiving credit for assignments are very important to high school students. Therefore, giving credit for journal writing without evaluating the quality of the language seems to be essential. Teachers may require students to write a minimum number of entries, of a minimum length, during a grading period with no evaluation of content, and assign a grade as the student complies with the requirement. However, some students will write just the minimum, sometimes using the same sentences again and again without reading the teacher's response. They do not become involved in communication or seem to benefit much from the writing.

An alternative to forcing reluctant students to write is to have those students who wish to write journals for extra credit. This allows them to choose whether or not to write and reduces the number of students involved. However, some students who might ultimately come to enjoy and benefit from the activity may never begin.

The teacher's level of proficiency in the target language may also present a problem, as some foreign language teachers may not have had the opportunity to develop or maintain a high level of fluency. They may feel somewhat reluctant to engage in an activity as unstructured as dialogue journal writing. However, journal writing can also provide *teachers* with a language learning experience that allows them to further develop his communicative abilities in the target language.

Journal writing benefits those students who learn languages faster and easier than others by providing them with opportunities to stretch their abilities. Alicia, who was in her fourth year of French, was not required to do many exercises that focused on grammar drill, provided she wrote regularly in our journal.

It is more difficult to tell what impact journal writing has on students who are struggling, but those who become involved in writing often establish a better rapport with the teacher than they would without the personal comunication of journal writing. A Spanish I student, León, had a great deal of difficulty during his first year. I believe that writing in the journal motivated him to work harder and to continue his study of Spanish beyond the first year.

Although journal writing does take a lot of time, the students benefit from it and I find that I truly enjoy reading what my students have written to me in Spanish or French and writing back to them. For me, the time spent reading and writing dialogue journals is time well and easily spent. §§

LINGUISTICS MADE EASY WITH THE DIALOGUE JOURNAL

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Illinois State University

So far, dialogue journal writing has been used primarily as a way of improving fluency and the command of English grammar of native and non-native English speakers. Another application of considerable importance is content area teaching. Because students interact with their instructor on a one-on-one basis, they can specify not only what concepts are confusing, but also what information they find interesting. Once an area of interest is identified, the instructor can advance the student's knowledge by discussing what is most likely to keep the student "tuned in." Thus, the dialogue journal is effective for sparking students' interests in certain aspects of a course and for promoting their understanding of content.

Using dialogue journal writing in an undergraduate applied English linguistics course allowed us to keep students involved in the topic and to gain greater insight into some of their conceptual problems. Most of the students were education majors who were taking the course because it is mandated by the state. They dreaded yet another semester of English grammar, which they had studied under such rubrics as "language arts" with varying degrees of success (or failure) for twelve years. They found the study of grammar boring, and they believed they would never be able to master its intricacies. Thus we were addressing a captive audience with a strong negative bias against our subject. We told the students that they could discuss in their journals any topic bearing on the course. This included a wide range of subjects - anything that had to do with language, linguistics, communication or education. The first day, to get them started, the instructor suggested they try to define language. In subsequent sessions, the topics were usually chosen by the students.

How did this writing help to make linguistics – the subject usually considered by students to be difficult and boring – comparatively easy and interesting?

In this article, we will discuss two journals which demonstrate how students with widely different interests and ability levels became engaged in the course topic. Sam, a theater education major, was one of the best students in the class. He was interested in communication and participated in class discussions with enthusiasm. His considerable insight into language evolved rapidly over the semester as well as his interest in the dialogue journal as a teaching method. Kathryn, on the other hand, was a poor student. Unlike Sam, she did not contribute to class discussions and was very concerned about her own speech patterns. Although an English major, she received one of the lower grades in the class. IN spite of these limitations, she became much more objective about language and usage over the course of the semester.

In her first entry, Kathryn raised the issue of usage and proposed that there are "good" and "bad" varieties of English:

> *I do ... understand alot of the basic principles. They seem to be what was taught from the beginning of my schooling, so my mind picked up on these. It seems to be frustrating because so much of what is acceptable to the common person isn't always the "correct" way of speaking or writing.*

When the instructor asked about the source of these ideas, Kathryn wrote:

> *I actually don't believe that my English is totally in-*

correct but I do feel I have errors in some of the things I say or in my writing. No one actually told me that except for some instructors I may have had in my former English classes. I've always had a picture in my mind of the correct or proper way of speaking or addressing someone. I probable got this from all the old movies I watch. I am a Katharine Hepburn fan and I adore old Black & White movies, 20's, 30's, 40's, any one of them.

The instructor used the student's concern about her own usage as a way of maintaining interest and expanding her concept of language. First, the instructor asked her to reconsider her negative self-judgments with such questions as "Why do you think there is something wrong with your English?" and "You might speak a different social dialect. Is that the case?" Then the instructor pointed out a distinction between speaking and writing, suggesting that writing is "something we learn, while speaking is something we acquire."

When she was asked to consider whether or not nonstandard dialects are adequate, Kathryn replied:

In regards to accents, I do believe that they are "better" or "worse" only because of the people who feel that way.

Even though she recognized that "adequacy" is generally confounded with social acceptability, she continued:

With regards to nonstandard dialects, I don't believe they are totally inadequate. I do believe the people can say everything they may need to, however in certain cases these nonstandard dialects will not be adequate. The person who speaks the dialect may not be able to get across their real feelings or ideas. In other words lower class people who speak in the same manner have trouble communicating with a higher class.

In Kathryn's final definition of language, we find the effect of this long exchange. Although far from complete and scientific, her definition shows a great leap in understanding, from a subjective criticism of her own language to a more objective understanding of language variety.

Language is a diverse system including many dialects. Many times a language changes with the passing of time. All languages are filled by rules.

Sam approached the journal with verve and enthusiasm. His first discussion of language showed a high level of interest in the subject and commitment to the task at hand:

How would I have defined language before this class? I think my answer would have been extremely linear - "language is the communication of ideas." However, as I sit in class and watch language unfolding and representing many dimensions of human history, socialization and personalities, I have discovered it to be much more than this. Language seems to be a direct relationship (or result of) the advancement of civilization. As ideas, technology, and time changes, so does language. With these added dimensions, I can no longer cheat language by simply calling it "the communication of ideas." As of yet, I don't have a definition - I'm waiting to see what else I discover about its relationship to society before I develop or construct a definition.

In his second definition the following week, he proposed:

Language, in my words, is the communication of a state of mind. Language not only serves to bridge thoughts between people but indicate an emotional state, feelings.

The instructor discussed how this definition failed and noted, "You see, to define language, you are going to have to get into the nitty-gritty of how we put words together to form sentences." Over the course of the semester, Sam returned several times to his definition. In his concluding entry, he said:

Language. Language. Language. It is something far more complex than I ever thought. My definition of language, now, includes the very scientific foundation from which it stems. Language is a sytematic, intertwined, and very structured process. It contains elements that work together in order to convey ideas and messages. Like a jigsaw puzzle, everyone must use and understand these pieces alike so that the same picture can be seen. That is why language is scientific - it contains rules and procedures that must be utilized in order to function. Like any profession, similar knowledge and conceptual understanding is imperative for

> *workers in that profession to function as a team. So, though languages throughout the world differ, they all contain their similar, relative foundations. So, all in all, language is a systematic process by which people communicate ideas. What I've learned in this class is how it is systematic.*

By the end of the semester, both Kathryn and Sam displayed a heightened interest in the linguistics course and had achieved a better understanding of the content. "Now that this course is completed," Kathryn said in her summing-up entry, "I feel that I have a better understanding of transformational grammars." Comparing what she had learned with traditional school grammar, she concluded that "transformational is the better way to go." She was inclined to "teach transformational to elementary child or at least use a combination of the two" because "it would seem to be a very good way to teach grammar and have it be understood." She also pointed to the fact that, due to the dialogue, the study of "transformational became easier" although it was "after a lot of time."

Sam summed up his achievements in the course and stressed once again that he enjoyed the class:

> *I have learned a great deal in this class - I'm sure you can detect this through my journal entries. It has been a well traveled road in this class for me - I went from a very abstract, emotional view of language at the beginning of the course to a strict, analytical sense in the middle. Now, I really believe I have come to a balance of the two.... Also, my view of grammar classes as boring or seemingly unimportant has changed. Transformational grammar has made me realize the significance of studying linguistics and grammar and is also a very interesting theory. It will be, with more research, what I hope to teach grammatically.*

Here a question arises: How did this writing help to make linguistics - the subject usually considered by students to be difficult and boring - comparatively easy and interesting? The question can be answered both cognitively and affectively. On the cognitive side, the repeated discussion of the problem that an individual student is concerned about makes the feared task a meaningful learning experience. In the long exchange, conceptual errors are corrected and students are guided to build and rebuild the appropriate schemata by associatiang what they have just learned with what they learned in the previous journal entries.

On the affective side, the one-to-one talk through the journal serves not only as a means of informative communication, but also as a means of bridging the affective gap between student and instructor. The instructor's position of academic superiority is transcended, and the student experiences a new freedom and self-confidence in the educational process. The results are impressive; Sam said, *"This journal has freed me up with you and, therefore, I find myself more open in the classroom, willing to ask questions, and anxious to solve problems."* §§

DIALOGUE JOURNALS AND THE RESEARCH WRITING CLASS

Jocelyn Steer
San Diego State University

Teaching the research paper to advanced ESL writers can be a difficult and often frustrating task for teacher and student alike. Some very basic problems make it so. Procrastination heads the list (what writer doesn't face that?), followed quickly by the ESL teacher's sense of inadequacy in evaluating what can be at times very "discipline-specific" writing (Spack, 1988:703). The final problem is a pedagogical one. Research writing classes have a sneaky way of turning into lecture classes, violating the principles of good interactive language learning.

What then can the research writing teacher do to overcome these problems? One technique which has proved helpful is using the dialogue journal to explore a student's research topic. Students submit one entry a week a minimum of one-half page long. I then respond to each entry individually. The student entries are necessarily more focused than one might find in a more generic writing class, so at the beginning of the semester, I offer the following ideas for how the writing might be approached:

1. **Respond to source material.** I encourage students to select, summarize and respond to research sources which they find particularly provocative.

2. **Ask questions about vocabulary or content of the source material.** This allows students to fully understand a passage they are working with. Often the questions refer to cultural concepts, which I clarify in my response.

3. **Respond to the instructor's questions.** My questions range from the personal ("What do you think?") to the more technical ("What is Operation Research?").

4. **Discuss their topic and the development of the paper.** Some very goal-oriented students never forget that their research is for the sole purpose of writing a paper. Such students use the journals to "think out" the organization of their paper.

The opportunity for a teacher and student to work through a topic together is clearly one important advantage of this type of writing. In addition to refining selected topics, students develop ideas based on teacher questions and comments in the journals. In this way, the student is forced to clarify complex ideas by writing them down. Or, he or she must find the words or means to relay discipline-specific information. The journals thus provide a trial run in a non-threatening format before the student commits anything to a final grade-bearing paper. This process also approximates the type of practice or exposure to terms and concepts a student might have in a real content classroom setting, where those terms and concepts are used freely and frequently, providing adequate input for appropriate future use.

In this way, journals are the "seedbeds" from which other, more public writing will emerge. They permit what Shih has called "an incubation period" for the germs of ideas to develop, allowing more input from outside sources before attempting formal writing. The writing facilitates thought, as Taylor says:

> *The art of writing, in addition to reflecting thought, can itself serve as a facilitator of thought and may in fact even help the writer in the process of writing to shape and refine ideas which are not yet fully formed.* (Taylor, 1981:6).

The beauty of the journals used in this way is that students write while they research, and they process that information on paper. Without the journals, they might go for weeks without commitiang pen to paper. The journal forces them to start their research early and keep up with it through the teacher-student

NEW DIALOGUE JOURNAL PUBLICATIONS

MacDonald, Marguerite. 1989. Oral dialogue journals: Spoken language in a communicative context. *TESL Reporter*, 22(2), 27-31.

In much the same way as written dialogue journals can help students develop writing skills, oral dialogue journals can bridge the gap between the security of written language and the spontaneity of oral language. In this article, MacDonald discusses her use of oral dialogue journals during a short-term non-intensive ESL program for Japanese students.

The oral dialogue journals consisted of an audio-tape exchange between American students in an introductory linguistics course and the Japanese ESL students. The Americans recorded first, preparing a two- to five-minute message. The Japanese students listened to the tape, took notes, and taped a reply.

The Japanese students' initial difficulties in understanding the American students on tape diminished with each exchange. Brief, set speeches that did not respond to the American students' questions gave way to more spontaneous talk. The American students also modified their language by simplifying their vocabulary and sentence structures to accommodate the comprehension levels of their partners.

The project proved beneficial and enjoyable for the Japanese students and their American counterparts. MacDonald reports that due to the success of the project, oral dialogue journals have become part of the ESL spoken language curriculum at Wright State University.

* * * * *

Nigel Hall's new book, *Writing with reason: The emergence of authorship in young children* (reviewed in the April 1989 issue of ***Dialogue***), is now available from Heinemann Educational Books, USA.

(Dialogue, cont. from p. 23)

interchanges in the journals.

The final advantage concerns the teacher. Reading and responding to a student's chosen topic over a period of weeks can relieve some, although certainly not all, of the difficulties an instructor faces in evaluating discipline-specific writing. The journals allow the instructor to gain familiarity with the chosen topic, and to get clarification on technical points or content areas which may fall substantially outside of the instructor's competence.

Based on my personal experience with the dialogue journal writing process in the research writing class, I have found that students procrastinate less and explore their topics more thoroughly. They enjoy the process, and the personal investment produces a more meaningful final research paper. §§

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DIALOGUE JOURNALS WITH LEARNING DISABLED STUDENTS: SOME SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

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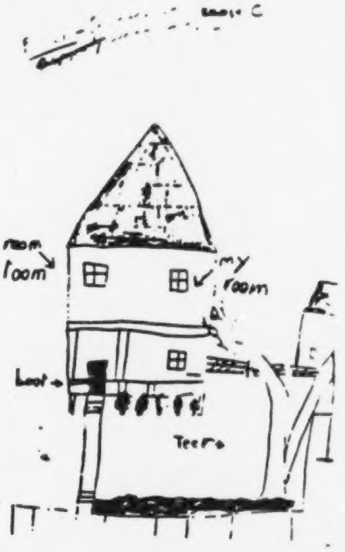
For over three years I have developed, and continue to refine, a holistic approach to language arts in my fifth and sixth grade classroom of learning disabled students, and dialogue journal writing is an important part of my approach. When I introduced dialogue journal writing to my students, I explained their use as a special writing activity similar to letter writing or talking on the phone, and, using an overhead projector, showed examples of dialogue journal interactions. Through the examples, the students observed that they were free to discuss or ask about whatever they wished, and I would answer their questions, discuss their topics, and possibly ask them questions. We then brainstormed a list of possible topics they might want to discuss, the list was posted in the classroom, and the children wrote their first entry.

In most ways, the dialogue journal writing of my students is similar to that of all students: privacy is important to them, and many protectively guard their journals while they write; they often use their journals to discuss personal concerns about their families and friends; several students have had situations occur, like separation of parents, death, or family illness, which they were unable to discuss verbally, but wrote about in their journals.

At the same time, there are special factors to be considered when using dialogue journal writing with learning disabled students. First, it has been my experience that these students have had many negative experiences with writing. Some are unwilling to take risks, and it takes time before they feel comfortable with the writing. This is particularly true if they have not had experience with process writing. They are uncomfortable using invented spelling and writing about whatever they choose, and they have trouble believing that their writing will not be graded. However, with patience I have been able to overcome these obstacles so that my students begin to see themselves as successful writers.

Second, time and patience are extremely important when using dialogue journal writing with these students. It takes time for them to believe that they can say something in writing, that what they have to say is important, and that their writing can be understood. I explain to my students many times that if they do not understand something I've written, they should ask me; and if I don't understand something they've written, I will ask them.

Many elementary age students learn to adopt their teacher's spelling, grammar and style after a short while. My students do this as well, but for them it can sometimes take much longer. Even though my students are fifth and sixth graders, some of them begin the year with very limited ability to express their ideas in writing. Marty, for example, began his dialogue journal by just drawing pictures and labeling them. I would write to him about what he had drawn. Gradually, he began to respond to me in writing, while still drawing a picture.



Now, a year later (my students stay with me for two years), he is beginning to initiate topics in writing and ask questions.

Do you like being a teachet
is it hard to be a teacher
how long have you don ben.
a teachet?.
This is my 7th year teaching
I've been here at Belle View
for 5 years
I love teaching! It makes
me feel good about myself and
its usually fun....

Likewise, Michael began this year writing only very minimally. He was self-conscious about his spelling and had trouble expressing himself (figure below). As the year has progressed, he is less concerned with his spelling and more concerned about what he wants to say.

Michael, how is your leg feeling?
over the weekend I went
shopping and out to eat How
about you?

I went to a brthday part
I love birthday parties. I
cant wait for my birthday
It's in October. When is your
birthday? My birthday is
in Non 5.
your birthday is 5 days after
mine! I want new clothes for
my birthday. What do you want?

Id no

Not only my students', but my own style of dialogue journal writing has changed this year. I am now much more cautious about asking questions, a strategy that has been successful with several of my students. For example, last year David simply answered my questions. This year, in response to my statements about myself, he shows interest in what I write and writes much more himself.

Marty, your house is wonderful!
you are such a good artist!
Do you like to draw animals?
Would you like to help Matt and
Nicole make pictures for the
school newspaper? yes I would
like. that
Good, Marty!! ☺ I'll let you
know what pictures we need.
Do you like to draw pictures of
animals? yes some Times
Can i draw a pictures
of a animals. do you
like to draw any pictures.
draw a picture of
a animal and I will
make The trees for you.

I think the tendency with learning disabled students is to look at the limited writing they produce and assume they "can't do it." My experience in the past three years has been that they can. Next year, I am looking forward to initiating this type of writing with primary aged learning disabled students. §§

This past weekend, Mr. Maguire
and I painted the dining
room. yesterday he left for
Italy. did he go on
a busisness trip
or for fun. well
you would be with
him if it was on
his own but you
do have Cinname
with you and dogs
are fun to play
with.
— He went to Italy on business
He called me at 6.00 Saturday
morning, which was noon, in
Italy. He said he's having
a miserable time, because he's
working so hard.

NOTES FROM THE FIELD

Reading Recovery

Next year I will be training a group of Reading Recovery teachers from Portland Public Schools. I will use dialogue journals as a means of keeping in touch with them and answering their questions. By doing this, I hope to document their conceptual growth throughout the year and keep track of their understanding of the program procedures as they implement the program in their schools. I should have a report by August 1990 and will let you know what happens.

Colin Dunkeld
Professor of Education
Portland State University

ESL Research Questions

I am in the process of writing a preliminary prospectus for my thesis which I want to do on some aspect of the dialogue journal. I used them when I taught Level 4 Writing at the BYU English Language Center last semester and found that they played a significant role in the success of my class. Now I want to prove their value when looking at the improvement of fluency, the building of confidence, and also the enjoyment of writing. However, these aspects seem to be quite evasive when I think of proving even one of them with empirical research. I am receptive to any suggestions.

Beverly Arbon
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NOTES FROM THE FIELD

Teaching Content in Context

Language arts classes present a unique opportunity for the professor and student to experiment with using the various literate genres student teachers will someday teach.

Dialogue journals were used in a class of preservice elementary teachers to encourage written expression between preservice teachers and their professor. On many occasions, students expressed literacy through various literary genres within the context of their written dialogue. The following journal entry includes a poem with the student's rationale for writing poetry.

Joan 3-89
For the first few months that we lived in Palma, I was lonely and depressed. I wrote some poems during that time. Here's one of them. Let me know what you think about it.

The Hills of Missouri are a sight to see
They stir something deep in the heart of me.
I look at their beauty to behold
And long once again to live within their fold...

The same student, Joan, was taught the value of "cinquain writing." Cinquain writing is an especially appropriate form of poetry to teach young children because the cinquain is easy to follow and reproduce. In a later journal entry, Joan uses the dialogue to try out the cinquain form.

I plan to use them with my students. I've never written one before, so I thought I'd try — here's one written for you and about you.

Teacher
Professional, pretty
Teaching, caring, sharing
Giving attention to students
Gail

It is evident dialogue journals contain personally relevant written dialogue shared between two interacting partners; however, in addition, this written dialogue may contain poetry, drama, and other written genres. When dialogue journals are used within a university classroom to prepare future educators to teach language arts, these journals demonstrate not only the utility of interactive writing, but also the process of composing a wide variety of written forms. Since language arts teachers must be well versed in all forms of writing, the dialogue journal presents an additional opportunity for teaching content (written formats) in context (by writing).

Beth Clark & Jack Farley
Murray State University

***Dialogue** is the newsletter about the uses, benefits, and theory of dialogue journals and other forms of communicating in writing about topics of mutual interest through continuous, functional conversations between (usually) learners and teachers. This newsletter provides an informal means of sharing information, ideas and concerns among those who are using dialogue journals and other interactive writing and studying their uses in the United States and in other countries. It is an outgrowth of two National Institute of Education research grants to study dialogue journal writing with native and non-native English speakers. The newsletter is now produced with partial support from the Center for Applied Linguistics. For information about dialogue journal research and practical applications or the work of CAL, write:*

DIALOGUE, CAL
1118 22nd St., N.W.
Washington, DC 20037

A volume of back issues of ***Dialogue***, from 1982 - 1989, is available for $25.00 each. Make checks payable to *Handbook Press.*

Editors:
Jana Staton
Joy Kreeft Peyton
Shelley Gutstein

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History of Dialogue Journals

A RECENT HISTORY OF DIALOGUE JOURNALS

Jana Staton and Joy Kreeft Peyton

This brief history of the use of "dialogue journals"--as distinguished from their monologue cousin, the personal journal--describes how the idea began, and focuses on the relationship of the various research projects which have been largely responsible for disseminating the idea. It has often been said that "nothing is as powerful as an idea whose time has come." Dialogue journals represent not a theoretically generated idea, but a teacher-developed classroom practice which came to the attention of other teachers, researchers, and teacher educators at a time when the broader ideas of interactional participation in learning and the power of natural conversational discourse were becoming widespread. Dialogue journals have spread quickly by word of mouth because they are an instance of concepts which have not yet found practical expression in terms of concrete educational practices.

Dialogue journals began as a classroom practice rather than as a research idea or theory-derived technique. We do not know exactly when or where some teacher first made personal written dialogues a consistent means of communication with students. Perhaps for many years there have been teachers who have written informal responses either to their students' entries in personal journals or to other written work, and a continuing conversation ensued. Teachers in many parts of the country, after hearing about the research on dialogue journals, have told us that they have already been doing this kind of written exchange with their students. The practice of interactive written conversations may go back as far as the beginning of writing itself. There is a long history of note passing among family members, fellow workers and students, but the beginning of a more permanent, cumulative notebook for such exchanges is unrecorded. However extensive the pre-history of dialogue journals, the recorded history of the research on dialogue journals in classroom settings is rather brief, beginning sometime in 1979.

Beginnings: The Classroom Practice

The particular history of dialogue journals as the focus of research and eventual dissemination began with one teacher in Los Angeles, Leslee Reed, who had been dialoguing with her sixth grade students since 1964. Her particular practice began when a principal asked teachers to make sure their students left school each day remembering something they had learned or done (so that they would not announce at the dinner table that they had learned "nothing"). Leslee Reed decided that asking students each afternoon to write down something they had learned would be

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This article is published as part of Dialogue Journal Communication: Classroom, Linguistic, Social and Cognitive Views, by Staton, Shuy, Peyton and Reed, Norwood, NJ: Ablex. 1988.

the best way to reinforce their memory. As she collected these slips of paper, she grew fascinated with the different responses to the same class lessons, and began writing back when a student's comment seemed to need an answer.

Since the daily collection of slips of paper soon became unmanageable, the use of bound composition books became a practical way to keep track of these daily dialogues. As the journals grew into year-long conversations, she found that the private discussions allowed students to ask questions, complain, request help in solving personal as well as academic problems, and to share feelings--in fact, the journals soon became the core of her instruction.

Because Reed found that the privacy of these conversations was the key to their success, she kept their existence rather quiet, letting parents and the principal know only that a personal journal was part of her instructional program, but not advertising the fact that she spent an hour a night responding to her students. Leslee Reed, like many excellent teachers committed to the art and science of teaching and to her students, saw nothing too remarkable in her practice of carrying on 26 private written conversations each day. Without some rather chance crossing of paths (see below), her use of dialogue journals would have escaped the notice of others, and perhaps many more years would have passed before any effort or study would have focused on this practice.

The Start of the Dialogue Journal Research Project

In 1979, Jana Staton, then studying counseling psychology at UCLA, was searching for instances of writing being used in school as a kind of informal or "preventive" intervention to help adolescents solve personal and academic problems. Staton heard about Reed's journals from a friend whose children had been in her class. Getting in touch with Mrs. Reed turned out to be easy, as they belonged to the same church in West Los Angeles. During the spring of 1979, Reed and Staton discussed her use of journals as a means of personal communication with each student. The obvious differences between traditional monologue journals (which students are asked to keep and turn in periodically, as a form of process writing and "self-reflection") and these ongoing conversations quickly became apparent, and the name "dialogue journal" suggested itself as a way to distinguish them from their more common and well-known cousins.

Staton decided that the dialogue journal practice would become the focus of her dissertation, and gained the cooperation of Reed and the school's principal, Mrs. Winifred Fischer, to visit the classroom, to meet with parents to secure initial consent, and then to spend time getting to know each student. 1979-80 became the year of collecting the first full-year corpus of dialogue journals, from 26 sixth graders in a Los Angeles public school which served a middle-class neighborhood. In what is now thought of as the "early days," Staton was sustained in her work largely by an intuition that these written dialogues were a new and unknown world, best reflected in the lines of a Santayana poem:

> O World, thou choosest not the better part;
> It is not wisdom to be only wise,
> And on the inner vision close the eyes,
> But it is wisdom to believe the heart.
> Columbus found a world and had no chart,
> Save that which faith deciphered in the skies.
> 'Twas all his science and his only art.

Because of the complexity of this natural language discourse, and its lack of resemblance to anything in the research literature on writing or composition, Staton asked Roger Shuy, a sociolinguist at Georgetown University, for help in developing methods for analysis. Discourse analysis and conversational analysis methods were becoming more widely known in the field of linguistics in 1979, and Shuy had just completed a major study of children's (oral) functional language at the Center for Applied Linguistics. Shuy was able to suggest a wealth of ideas and provide guidance to the growing new fields of discourse and conversational analysis. Bud Mehan at UCSD and Pat Greenfield of UCLA also contributed initially in formulating how research could be done on interactive written texts.

In the middle of this 1979-80 year of data collection, Staton submitted a proposal to the National Institute of Education (NIE) to study in detail the 26 dialogue journal texts and describe the nature of the journals as a writing event. At that time, the Writing Team at NIE, headed by Dr. Marcia (Whiteman) Farr, was encouraging more ethnographically and qualitatively oriented studies, and NIE funded the study, to be conducted at the Center for Applied Linguistics.

With the funding of this first study, "Analysis of Dialogue Journal Writing as a Communicative Event," in July, 1980, Staton moved to Washington to conduct the analysis, forming a team with Roger Shuy and, very shortly, Joy Kreeft, who had just come to Georgetown University to study sociolinguistics. Thus, the original study was stretched (with a lot of volunteered time) into a three-person effort in Washington, with a fourth member, Reed, in Los Angeles carefully reading everything that was written, and continually deepening our understanding of the dialogue journal practice. The final report, which was completed in February of 1982 and disseminated by the Center for Applied Linguistics, demonstrates the rich and varied language and thought which evolve as two people interact about mutually interesting and important events and topics over an extended period of time.

Study of Dialogue Journals with Nonnative English Speakers

In the fall of 1980, Reed was unexpectedly transferred to a new school in the middle of Los Angeles, one with students who had migrated to the United States from all over the world. This unplanned event provided a wonderful opportunity to observe dialogue journal use with nonnative English speakers. The students in her sixth grade class came from 14 different countries and 9 different language backgrounds, and some of them knew little or no English when the year began. Any thought that the dialogue journals would be less successful with students not yet proficient in English was quickly dispelled as Reed began to report on the value of the dialogue in helping her students acquire a second language. With Reed's encouragement, arrangements were made to ask student and parent consent to copy a second year of journals, and to make a videotaped record of this classroom.

This opportunity to study dialogue journal use with a group of nonnative English speakers led to a second dissertation, and the second NIE grant growing out of Mrs. Reed's classroom. Kreeft began her dissertation research in 1982, visiting Mrs. Reed's classroom to observe the dialogue journal practice and interview Reed and her students. Kreeft received her first NIE grant in 1983 through the Center for Applied Linguistics to support the analysis of dialogues written by nonnative speakers. Staton, Shuy and Kreeft collaborated on this study, and Robby Morroy, another sociolinguistics student at Georgetown University, joined the research team. The NIE report, "Dialogue Writing: Analysis of Student-Teacher Interactive Writing in the Learning of English as a Second Language," completed in 1984, explores in depth the many aspects of the journal interaction that support and promote second language acquisition. The report is greatly enhanced by a practitioner-oriented chapter written by Leslee Reed. It is available through the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) (see ED 252 097).

Through a second grant from the Department of Education, this time the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI), to the Center for Language Education and Research, Kreeft (now Peyton) continued the study of dialogue journal writing with nonnative English speakers, now working with teachers in Arlington County, Virginia, in grades 1 through high school. This work has resulted in a teacher handbook (*Dialogue Journal Writing with Limited English Proficient Students: A Handbook for Teachers*, published by Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages [TESOL], in Washington, D.C.); a workshop packet for teacher training (available from the Center for Applied Linguistics); and several published research and educational articles. Through close collaborative work with Ruth Sedei, a first grade teacher in Arlington, we were able to follow the emerging literacy of beginning writers in dialogue journals.

The Dialogue Journal Project at Gallaudet University

In 1982, as the first dialogue journal study was being completed, Dr. William Stokoe invited Staton to begin working with him as a consultant at Gallaudet University (the federally supported four-year university in Washington, D.C. for hearing-impaired students). An initial project, funded by the Gallaudet Research Institute, encouraged college faculty to adapt dialogue journals for use in communicating with deaf students at the college level, and began documenting the effects on both deaf students and their teachers of sustained written interaction in a conversational format. The Gallaudet campus also includes model elementary and secondary schools, and soon teachers at all levels--from kindergarten through graduate school--were involved in using dialogue journals.

The research focus of the Gallaudet project was to document the practical benefits of dialogue journals from the teacher's perspective and identify strategies for achieving optimal effectiveness within actual classroom settings. Teachers at the college and pre-college level, especially Cindy Puthoff, Jean Slobodzian and Margaret Walworth, have become involved in the analysis of their students' texts, and have conducted workshops around the country for other teachers of deaf students and published papers growing out of research on the project. Two primary grade teachers, Susan Searls and Jean Slobodzian, pioneered the use of dialogue journals with young deaf students and, along with Puthoff and Staton, have completed a handbook for elementary and secondary teachers on the use of dialogue journals, focusing particularly on their use and benefits with deaf students (It's Your Turn Now!, 1986, available from Outreach Programs, Gallaudet University). A handbook on college-level uses, with articles from the university faculty, is also being published by Gallaudet.

Spreading the Word

When this research began, there was no formal plan to disseminate information about the dialogue journal practice to other teachers. Dialogue journals were seen as a unique expression of this particular teacher's concepts and style of teaching, and it seemed unlikely that many other teachers would pick up the idea without training and perhaps some kind of incentive. Thus, the major presentations and papers from the first project were intended primarily for researchers. However, because the dialogue journals represented a concrete instance of such concepts as interactional scaffolding, mutual knowledge construction, and natural language acquisition, a number of those researchers had both the theoretical framework and a commitment to practice to enable them to begin disseminating the idea as soon as they heard about it. These folks--Courtney Cazden, Dixie Goswami, Bambi Schieffelin, Jessie Roderick, Angela Jaggar, Dorothy Strickland, Vic Rentel, Yetta and Ken Goodman, Shirley Brice Heath, Fred Erickson, Susan Florio, Chris Clark, Fran Davis and Sarah Huddleson, among others--heard about the dialogue journals, went home, and either began using them in college courses or encouraged classroom teachers they worked with to use them.

Thus, the early research reports and word of mouth led to an increasing number of teachers implementing dialogue journals effectively, well before any written descriptions were available. It is now apparent that a sizeable number of teachers from kindergarten through college share the same basic educational precepts as Leslee Reed, and upon hearing a brief description of dialogue journals understand exactly how to fit the practice into their teaching.

Even during this research phase, two very active practitioner-oriented dissemination efforts began. In Los Angeles, Leslee Reed was asked in 1981 to join the UCLA Writing Project as a consultant, and has given workshops for teachers throughout the greater Los Angeles area ever since, as well as presented at the Chancellor's Conference on Composition at UCLA. On the East Coast, during the years from 1981 to 1984, several Georgetown University Ph.D. candidates, including Shelley Gutstein and Joy Kreeft Peyton, began using dialogue journals with English as a second language (ESL) students in classes they were teaching. Gutstein and Kreeft collaborated with other ESL teachers--Christine Meloni (George Washington University), Carol Harmatz (Georgetown University), and Henry Batterman (Lewis and Clark College)--to present a number of workshops in 1982, 1983 and 1984, including presentations at the TESOL annual meetings and WATESOL (Washington Area TESOL) meetings in the Washington, D.C. area. These workshops and presentations, based on these teachers' own use as well as the data beginning to emerge from the study of nonnative speakers, provided a practitioner-oriented focus. A network began to form of ESL and foreign language teachers using dialogue journals around the country.

Our brief attempt to describe how the use of dialogue journals has spread from teacher to teacher and from researcher-educator to teacher points out that most people who actually try out dialogue journals not only find them invaluable, but become dissemination centers for everyone around them.

The DIALOGUE newsletter began in April, 1982 as an informal means of getting in touch with the growing body of people who had attended workshops or research presentations or who had written for the NIE report. As both our information base and our readership grew, the newsletter changed from a free mimeographed document into an 8 to 12-page newsletter with a paid subscription list. The newsletter discusses specific issues and topics which the dialogue journals illuminate, and provides a channel of interaction with many people involved or interested in dialogue journal use in a wide variety of settings. The list of around 500 represents a mix of researchers, classroom teachers, teacher trainers, and educators of the deaf throughout the United States, Canada and overseas. Fortunately, the Center for Applied Linguistics has been unfailingly supportive of the production and dissemination of the newsletter, allowing it to grow into a more professional product on a budget which covers only printing and postage.

Dissertations and Other Research Reports

Along with the NIE grant, Staton continued to develop her concepts for a dissertation in the field of counseling practice, which finally emerged in 1984 as "Acquiring Practical Reasoning through Teacher-Student Interaction in Dialogue Journals," Graduate School of Education, UCLA. It extended her research for the NIE grant within the framework of informal, preventive counseling in the classroom, analyzing the teacher's intuitive use of interactional scaffolding in thinking through social problems with students in early adolescence.

Kreeft's dissertation at Georgetown University, also developed in tandem with her NIE research, focused on the emerging grammatical competence of the beginning ESL learners, describing their patterns of use of English morphology in this written medium, and change over ten months' time in their use of certain morphemes.

Morroy's dissertation, also at Georgetown, examined more closely the strategies Leslee Reed uses to respond and establish understanding with students learning English as a second language. As more doctoral candidates began adapting dialogue journals to their own teaching situations, dissertations on the use of interactive written conversations with other students have appeared. Barbara Bode (University of South Florida) studied the effect of dialogue journal writing, with parents and teachers, on first grade students' beginning literacy development; Deborah Braig (University of Pennsylvania), second-graders' developing "audience awareness" as manifested in their dialogue journal texts; Martha Dolly (Indiana University of Pennsylvania), like Robby Morroy, the role of various teachers in maintaining dialogue journal conversations, but here with adults; Jack Farley (University of Cincinnati), the dialogue journal texts of mildly retarded vocational rehabilitation students; Shelley Gutstein (Georgetown University), topic development in the dialogue journals of Japanese university students learning English; Rich Harrington (University of Pennsylvania), high school students' use of metalanguage in oral events and dialogue journal writing; and Marsha Markman (University of Maryland), the effects of dialogue journal use on attitudes and writing skills in upper division composition classes. These are the dissertations that have been completed at the time of this writing. Many more are under way.

Other major research reports have also pushed our knowledge and thinking beyond one teacher with two groups of students. Robert Rueda (University of California, Santa Barbara) studied dialogue journal writing on computers with handicapped students; Paul Jones (School of International Training, Brattleboro, Vermont) has done a very careful description of the benefits and limits of dialogue journals in adult ESL instruction; and Mary Maguire, in Montreal, Canada, has studied the functional aspects and cohesive quality of native and nonnative English-speaking first-graders in Canada.

The Future

Our work is far from complete. We neither invented the practice of dialogue journals nor the theory and concepts underlying them, and we have tried to emphasize in this account the growing number of people who have participated in some way in this work. As teachers and researchers around the world recognize the power of extended written dialogues for students in many different learning situations and seek to integrate the use of dialogue journals into their programs, they, along with us, continue to seek to understand how the basic concept of functional, contextualized written interaction can fit into and even influence other kinds of communication in the classroom (oral, signed, written), and how teachers can effectively utilize the dialogue journal text to conduct research on their students' needs and progress and their own educational practices. We feel that the inner vision that guided our early work has indeed led us into a complex and exciting new world, and we are eager to continue in this collaborative exploration with other teachers and researchers.

April 1989

Research Abstracts

DIALOGUE JOURNAL WRITING AS A COMMUNICATIVE EVENT[1]

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study analyzed the text of 26 student-teacher dialogue journals from a sixth-grade classroom, as a developmental link between students' natural competence in oral conversation and their developing competence in writing language. Dialogue journal writing is interactive, functional writing, which occurs between students and their teacher on a daily basis, about self-generated topics of interest to each writer. The practice was developed by teachers and has been used by the teacher in this study for seventeen years in a Los Angeles classroom.

Dialogue journals were selected for study because they constitute a purposeful use of writing in the school environment, one which has meaning and benefits for both student and teacher. They also serve as a bridge between natural spoken conversation with its participants and "turns" and the traditional classroom task of essay writing. The study finds that students and teacher share power in this communicative event: Students are responsible for initiating the topics of discussion, both writers have equal turns, and both writers respond as an interested audience, asking questions, offering elaborative comments, giving opinions, etc. The teacher is a full participant in the written conversation and does not correct or grade the writing. Students learn to be more elaborative and to introduce new, interesting information in their writing in order to continue a topic discussion, just as in mutual conversations between friends. The journal's functional nature brings out students' abilities to make persuasive arguments and to offer evidence to support their complaints or explanations. The journals provide opportunities to internalize an audience perspective, a major difficulty for all writers, because the teacher actively responds with questions, comments, and elaborations, thus modeling how an audience may think and react to written messages.

The year-long sets of dialogue journals were collected from an "average" sixth grade class in Los Angeles during 1979-80, through an ethnographic data collection effort which included extensive interviews with the teacher and students, and classroom observation. The goal of the analysis was to analyze the language itself in order to describe the interactional structure of these cumulative dialogues and the strategies for jointly initiating, developing, and maintaining the dialogues. The corpus includes 4,600 pages of text or about 170 pages for each student-teacher journal. The analysis used a variety of discourse methods, including topic analysis, analysis of language functions, conversational strategies, and structures of reasoning. Other goals of this first study were to adapt and validate methods for analysis of longitudinal, interactive discourse and to raise questions and implications for further study.

Among the findings of the study are:

Competence in Writing

Writing can be a natural form of communication for young writers when it originates in a real-life, communicative context.

Dialogue journal writing builds directly on the communicative competence of students in oral language and allows them to use the entire range of language strategies already mastered in oral conversation.

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[1] This study was funded by the National Institute of Education, Writing Research Program, NIE G-No-80-0122, Jana Staton, Principal Investigator with Roger Shuy and Joy Kreeft, Center for Applied Linguistics, Washington, DC 1980-1982. It is now available from the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (Nos. ED 214 196; ED 214 197).

Topics

Students and teacher write about a wide variety of topics--academic, interpersonal, and personal. Over the year, there is a definite shift toward personal topics, as writers come to know each other better, but academic, school-related concerns remain important.

Student-initiated topics are recycled and develop into coherent, year-long themes in each student's journal. The teacher plays a major role in focusing the student's attention on developmental tasks of personal significance--such as making friends, building up physical ability, or doing better at math--by her comments and reflective questions.

Functional Language

Across the year, students change in the direction of using a wider range of specific language functions--expressing more personal opinions, reporting personal facts, evaluating, and complaining more. A study of complaints in student writing found an increase in "felicitous" complaining over the year; that is, making explicit the injustice of giving specific evidence.

The teacher uses questions to encourage and develop students' awareness and reflective thinking. Reflective questions effectively focus the student on considering alternative ways of handling the situation.

Over time, students show more proficiency in organizing their writing, and their surface difficulties with spelling, syntactical constructions, and punctuation are reduced, even though their journal writing is not corrected by the teacher. A focus on functional communication appears to enhance awareness of the conventions of written language (formal mechanics).

Mutual Interaction/Interactive Discourse

Dialogue journal writing, even for students with learning disabilities or limited English proficiency, is coherent, organized, topic-focused writing, in part because of the interactional support provided by the teacher through comments and questions. Students with greater difficulty in using written language in regular class assignments generally perform at higher levels of competence in their dialogue journal.

Dialogue journal writing reduces the normal status and power asymmetry of student and teacher and allows students to engage in mutually constructed, continued conversations indicating comembership status with the teacher based on shared interests.

Writing as Thinking

The dialogue journals actively demand, and provide students with opportunities for, higher order relational thinking. The teacher's strategy of commenting on student topics by adding new information and introducing more general principles or meaning provides students with a model for more elaborated, relational thinking in written discourse.

The dialogue journals are also a significant reading event in which the student must use critical thinking skills to compare given and new information, integrating the teacher's response with his/her earlier comment.

Benefits to the Teacher

The success of the dialogue journal is highly dependent on the teacher's direct participation and involvement. It requires that teachers use all of their skills, knowledge, and values in reaching, assisting, and teaching students. The benefits to the teacher appear to be as great as to the student, creating a supportive, open classroom environment based on trust and mutual understanding, and allowing the teacher to personalize instruction and get daily feedback on student attitudes and perceptions.

DIALOGUE JOURNALS AS A RESEARCH AND PEDAGOGICAL TOOL WITH LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENT STUDENTS

Dialogue journals, a regularly occurring written conversation between students and a teacher, have proven extremely successful in a wide variety of educational settings--at early elementary levels, with teenagers, and with adults; in both adult basic education and university classes; for early literacy development as well as for discussion of advanced literary texts; in language arts and content classes; with native English speakers, as well as students learning English or some other language as a second language.

Practitioners using dialogue journals have attested to the tremendous benefits, both to teachers and students, gained from their use. Teachers can, possibly for the first time, communicate openly, honestly, and individually with students; learn about their interests and backgrounds; and plan lessons accordingly. Students have a wonderful means for expressing themselves in private, without the embarrassment or censure that spoken conversation often entails for anyone learning a second language.

The Dialogue Journal Study is both a research and professional development project. The purpose of the project is to better understand how dialogue journals can best promote the academic success of limited English proficient students in grades K-12.

Project activities include:

- o analysis of dialogue journal data already collected from a sixth grade classroom in Los Angeles;
- o collaborative research with teachers of limited English proficient students, grades K- 12, in the Washington, D.C. area, to document their writing practices in the classroom (which will include dialogue journal writing) and the writing development of their students over one year's time;
- o analysis of writing samples, background, and ethnographic data collected during the period spent in the project classrooms.

Products will be:

- o a question-answer sheet about dialogue journals;
- o a practitioner handbook for using dialogue journals with limited English proficient students;
- o a workshop packet (which will include the handbook) for use by practitioners to train other practitioners;
- o a series of research reports of the results of the data analysis;
- o a series of practitioner-oriented reports;
- o Dialogue, a newsletter about dialogue journal research and use, distributed to researchers and practitioners three times a year.

This study is being conducted by the Center for Language Education and Research (CLEAR), funded by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI), Department of Education. Project director is Joy Kreeft Peyton, Center for Applied Linguistics, 1118 22nd Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20037, (202) 429-9292.

languages, in the process of meaningful interaction. A third study focuses specifically on the *teacher's questions*, and finds questioning patterns in the journals that are quite different from those typically found in classroom discourse. Questions in the journals serve not to check student knowledge, but to support and advance the student's contribution, and thus promote critical thinking and writing development. A fourth study examines the *language functions* used by the teacher and the students in these journals, and compares patterns of function use found in these data to those found in the dialogue journals of native English speakers (from Staton, et al., 1982). This study identifies clear patterns in the teacher's use of language functions, as she adapts her language to the English proficiency level of the student, and also guides the students in the use of particular functions.

Section III documents the students' use of selected *English grammatical morphemes* in the journals. Chapter Eight, a cross-sectional, quantitative study, compares patterns of morpheme use among the individual students and with patterns found in previous studies of morphology in ESL, and finds a great deal of uniformity in these patterns. Chapter Nine, a more qualitative, longitudinal study, analyzes change over the ten months of writing in the use of each morpheme. This study also examines in more detail the linguistic factors that influence use of the morphemes and the importance of individual learner strategies and language background in patterns of morpheme use, and discusses important analytical issues that arise in the analysis of morphemes in dialogue journal text.

Among the findings of the study are:

- ESL students can read and write in a dialogue before they have mastered the forms and structures of English. Their writing over time reflects aspects of their language development.

- Although all students demonstrate development in their ability to write in English during a year's time, patterns of development are by no means uniform among students, nor do they occur at the same rate for individual students.

- For ESL students, dialogue journals can serve social and cultural as well as language acquisition purposes.

- Teacher strategies in the dialogue journal that seem to be effective for eliciting student writing include a general one of allowing students to select topics to be discussed and more specific ones such as asking information and opinion questions, elaborating and adding information, and making generalizations from specific statements made by the students.

- In her dialogue journal writing, the teacher is sensitive to the linguistic ability of each student and modifies the interactional, functional, and syntactic features of her writing accordingly.

- The range of student language function use is clearly related to their level of proficiency in English.

- Over time students' writing becomes more interactive--they answer more questions, ask more questions, and continue more topics for longer periods of time.

- There is considerable development over time in certain morphological features of the students' writing: irregular past tense, progressive *be* and *-ing*, and definite and indefinite articles. Others show very little change over time: regular past, possessive, third singular, and plural *-s*.

DIALOGUE WRITING: ANALYSIS OF STUDENT-TEACHER INTERACTIVE WRITING IN THE LEARNING OF ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE[1]

DESCRIPTIVE SUMMARY

This study presents dialogue journal writing as an effective practice with students learning English as a second language (ESL) and analyzes the dialogue journal interaction of six sixth grade students who are beginning ESL learners and their teacher. A dialogue journal is a written conversation that occurs frequently (daily, in this study) throughout the school year. Students write as much as they wish and about anything they wish, and the teacher responds to each student entry--not correcting or evaluating, but as a co-participant in the conversation. The kinds of writing that occur can be as diverse as the students. They describe their activities, feelings and attitudes, ask questions, seek advice, argue their points, and even complain. Their topics cover personal and academic concerns.

The data base for the study is the daily dialogue journal writing for a ten-month period (from September to June) of the six students and their teacher in a classroom in Los Angeles. The students are in a classroom of 27 students from 12 countries and 10 language backgrounds. The first languages of the students chosen for the study are: Korean (3), Vietnamese/Chinese (1), Burmese (1), and Italian (1). These students had been in the United States for less than one year when they began writing in dialogue journals, and therfore can all be considered beginning English learners. One student, from Vietnam, was not literate in his own language when he began writing in English. Four students are male, two female. Data collected during classroom observations and interviews with the teacher and each student complement the dialogue journal text.

The study is divided into three sections. Section I places the dialogue journal interaction within the classroom context. In one chapter the teacher, Leslee Reed, gives the teacher's perspective, explaining the importance of the dialogue journal as a classroom management tool in this multilingual, multicultural classroom. For her, dialogue journals serve as: an aid to lesson planning; a way to individualize instruction; a source of information about students' culture, activities, and needs; a means for students to express themselves freely; a private channel for honest communication; and a means for resolving difficult classroom situations. A second chapter gives a detailed profile of each student, describes the student's progress during the year, and makes available substantial portions of the written text.

Section II consists of studies of the dialogue journal text, focusing on various aspects of the discourse. In one study strategies that the teacher employs to promote student participation in the journals and to support student writing are identified and discussed, and a method for determining the effectiveness of each strategy in this type of interaction is outlined. A second study examines characteristics of the language input that individual students receive in the teacher's dialogue journal entries, and argues that the acquisitional processes that take place in the dialogue journal interaction resemble in many ways the process of oral language acquisition. We can conclude, therefore, that reading and writing can be naturally acquired, in both first and second

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[1] This study was funded by the National Institute of Education, NIE-G-83-0030, Joy Kreeft and Roger W. Shuy Principal Investigators, with Jana Staton, Leslee Reed and Robby Morroy, Center for Applied Linguistics, Washington, D.C., 1983 - 1984. It is now available from the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (ED 252 097).

Dialogue Journals as a Learning Tool in High School Freshman Algebra

Sharon Elizabeth Johnson Andrews

The University of South Dakota
August, 1989

ABSTRACT

This study, involving twenty-five male and female Algebra I students, looked at the influence writing in dialogue journals had upon students' academic performance and attitude toward mathematics. During the spring semester, students in the experimental group dialogued with the researcher approximately two to three times per week in addition to their regular classroom routine. Students in the control group functioned as normal. Students were pre- and posttested on two instruments, a Criterion-Referenced Test (CRT) and the Mathematics Attitude Inventory (MAI). No significant differences between the two groups were found on either instrument. However, results of statistical analysis on the CRT approached significance, signifying a trend that may be attributed to the treatment.

ABSTRACT

A TEACHER REFLECTS ON A HIGH SCHOOL ENGLISH CLASS: THE DIALOGUE JOURNAL'S CONTRIBUTION TO LEARNING AND TO INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS

Doris B. Armstrong, unpublished dissertation
New York University, 1989

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This teacher/researcher case study describes a small 11th grade suburban high school English class, and focuses on four of its nine students. Dialogue journals were used for six months, during which students wrote about classroom matters and received written marginal replies. Neither corrections nor credit were given. The students wrote free responses to literature, answers to guide questions, early drafts of compositions, opinions about grades, complaints about and support of each other, and evaluations of learning activities.

Because of communications in the journals the teacher/researcher was able to counsel students on interpersonal relations, and also to modify lesson plans in response to students' expressed needs. The students were thereby enabled to have some power over class plans, to rethink responses to literature, to make further drafts of compositions, and to change

their attitudes toward each other and toward the teacher/researcher's practices.

The four focus students used the dialogue journal in differing ways. The number of pages written ranged from 19 to 109; writing in response to curriculum topics ranged from 68% of entries to 100% of entries; and writing on interpersonal matters, from 9% of entries to 28% of entries.

This inquiry exposes, within the context of a conventional high school, barriers to learning caused by the school as an organization: teacher/researcher's work load, students' work loads, conflict between goals stated in the school curriculum and those of the teacher, fragmentation of time, lack of time for individual conferences, and emphasis on grades and credentials to the detriment of learning and thinking.

The dialogue journal experience, nevertheless, revealed thinking about literature, composition, and interpersonal relations. The study suggests that the increase in communication with self and between teacher and student empowered learning in some of the students and was a factor in the partial resolution of conflicts.

The Effect of Using Dialogue Journal Writing With First Graders and Their Parents or Teachers as an Approach to Beginning Literacy Instruction

by Barbara A. Bode
University of South Florida
December, 1988

The purpose of this research was to investigate an instructional approach for enhancing the development of beginning literacy using integrated reading and writing instruction. The effect on language arts achievement of dialogue journal writing between either parents or teachers and first grade students who were allowed to use invented spelling was studied. The three methods of developing language arts performance were: dialogue journal writing with parents, dialogue journal writing with teachers, and a traditional, county-adopted reading/language arts program. The dependent variables were the six language arts subtests of the Stanford Achievement Test; written expression as measured by the Metropolitan Achievement Test- Writing Test subtests: holistic writing, sentence formation, word usage and writing mechanics; and dictated spelling measured by the Schonell Spelling Test. This investigation was comprised of two parts: the evaluative research using a quasi-experimental design and a case study approach.

A total of 204 subjects in three schools completed the five month program. The MANOVA Omnibus test was significant ($p<.000$). Post hoc comparisons showed the following significant differences among treatment groups: The parent ($p<.039$) and the teacher ($p<.000$) groups, both singly and

together ($p<.004$) were significantly higher than the control group. A stepdown analysis showed that holistic writing and reading comprehension accounted for most of the variance between groups.

Univariate F-test comparisons were computed for each dependent variable. These comparisons showed that both the parent ($p<.01$) and the teacher ($p<.05$) groups were significantly higher than the control group on the holistic writing evaluation. The parent group scored significantly higher than the control group on reading comprehension ($p<.01$), dictated spelling ($p<.05$), listening comprehension ($p<.01$), and sentence formation ($p<.01$). The parent group scored significantly higher than the teacher group on holistic writing evaluation ($p<.05$), reading comprehension ($p<.01$), dictated spelling test ($p<.01$), word study skills ($p<.01$), and spelling ($p<.05$).

Case studies were completed on four subjects using the dialogue journal. Growth in syntactical maturity as measured by the T-Unit, spelling development and usage of completed sentence, capitalization of sentences, and ending punctuation was evident across most cases.

ABSTRACT

SIX AUTHORS IN SEARCH OF AN AUDIENCE: DIALOGUE JOURNAL WRITING OF SECOND GRADERS

DEBORAH E. BRAIG

DR. BAMBI SCHIEFFELIN, CHAIRPERSON
UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

This study examined the audience awareness characteristics in the dialogue journal writing of children ages six, seven, and eight.

A total of seventeen children and one teacher/researcher participated in this ethnographic study over a period of nine months. The data were collected during the usual language arts sessions in an elementary school. What the children wrote in their journals, what they said about the writing process in taped interviews, and the researcher field notes constituted the data base.

The findings of the research suggested:

1. Young writers demonstrated in their dialogue journal writing that they considered the needs of their intended audience on communicative, affective, and reflective levels in both spontaneous and solicited contexts.

2. The young children's 'talk about writing' in interviews supported the fact that they intended to meet the needs of their audience on different levels.

3. Dialogue journals played a facilitating role in the development of the children's written language competence.

The dialogue journal was selected for this research as a specific context for exploring the concept of audience awareness in writing.

Within this journal context the young writers demonstrated the ability to respond in diverse ways to a known audience over time. Their 'talk about writing' supplied support for the fact that the children intended to meet the needs of their audience. The dialogue journal format seemed to facilitate the children's writing development and their ability to talk about writing with respect to audience. Journals provided topic choice and feedback, major characteristics of oral language, which encouraged and supported the children's diverse uses of written language. In the process of attending to their audience the young writers learned the personal functions that writing could serve for them. Six authors had searched for and had found an audience in the written exchanges of dialogue journals.

ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

A STUDY OF SOLICIT AND GIVE MOVES IN THE MANAGEMENT OF DIALOGUE JOURNAL CONVERSATION BY ADULT ESL STUDENTS

Martha R. Dolly
Indiana University of Pennsylvania
December 1987

Recent second language acquisition research has shown that language learners must interact with more competent speakers in order to learn to manage conversational interaction and to use language effectively and appropriately in social contexts. Specifically, they must interact by participating in negotiation of meaning, the mutual collaboration of conversation partners to advance the conversation and repair communication breakdowns. Such interaction is rare in second language classrooms, but dialogue journal writing -- written interaction which shares some of the features of oral conversation -- allows for conversational collaboration and encourages the learner to take substantial responsibility for conversation management.

This study analyzed the amount of responsibility ESL students actually assume for advancing and repairing the written conversation. An analytic procedure based on previous research in conversational analysis and dialogue journal discourse was developed to analyze the patterns of give and solicit moves in the data, which consisted of 260 dialogue journal entries composed by twelve adult ESL students

and their native-speaking conversation partner, the researcher. Percentages of each move type were calculated in order to determine partners' levels of "reciprocity" (that is, sharing of responsibility for each move type) in conversation advancement and repair. This quantitative analysis was supplemented by a qualitative interpretation of the journals of four students of similar linguistic proficiency.

The quantitative analysis showed that the teacher's interaction with students was quite consistent (for example, the teacher always made frequent use of extending solicits), whereas students' interactional patterns varied greatly. Some students actively advanced and repaired the conversation, achieving reciprocity in a number of the ten move categories; other students, including some of the more linguistically proficient ones, played a more passive role (for example, never initiating repair and doing far more responding than soliciting or reacting). The findings suggest that the most active participants are those who make moderate use of each move type; more passive participants use one or two moves to excess, virtually ignoring others. The qualitative analysis sought to explain the great variation in level of conversational responsibility (ranging from least to most reciprocal) shown by four students of high linguistic proficiency.

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

A DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS OF THE JOURNAL WRITING ABILITIES OF A GROUP OF EDUCABLE MENTALLY RETARDED YOUNG ADULTS

By

Jack W. Farley, Jr.
University of Cincinnati, 1984

This study examined written communication between six educable mentally retarded students who were between the chronological ages of 17.2 and 19.5 years old and me, their teacher. The primary purpose of this research was to describe the types and frequency of topics and language functions expressed by the students in dialogue journals. A secondary focus was the syntactic structures, the spelling and the punctuation used in these journals. The data base for the study was a daily dialogue journal entry by each student and a response by me, for a 40-day period.

The six students were enrolled in a vocational center which served handicapped students exclusively. All were enrolled in the same language arts class at the vocational center. The six students represent all of the students in the class who were capable of maintaining a dialogue journal independently and from whom permission to copy and analyze the journals was obtained, from them and their parents. Four of the students were male and two were female, four were white and two were black. Three of the students lived in an urban setting. One lived in a suburban setting, one lived in a rural setting, and one lived in a small town.

The forty daily entries of each student resulted in 7,263 student-produced words, an average of 30.3 words written daily by each student, with the most words in any journal being 2,290 and the least, 580. A total of 791 language functions were expressed in all the journals with an average of 3.3 functions

per student entry. The highest number of student-produced functions in one journal was 160, and the lowest, 89. All six students repeatedly reported opinions, personal facts, and general facts; responded to questions; made predictions; and made evaluative comments. At least one student also wrote complaints and apologies; gave directives; asked questions; and offered thank you statements. All the students produced functionally relevant, interactive written communication.

Despite the marked discrepancy between the average chronological age of the group (18.1 years) and the average mental age of the group (10.0 years), the topics discussed in the journals tended to be more appropriate to the chronological age of the student or more appropriate to a generic age grouping than to the mental age of the student. For example, "driving" and "marriage," both topics of discussion, require a minimum of sixteen chronological years to legally experience. Graduation, another topic of discussion, generally occurs at around eighteen years of age. Discussion of high school course work was common, as was discussion of employment—both typically concerns of older rather than younger students. Discussion of family and entertainment, especially sports, was common and tended to reflect the interests of a generic age grouping rather than of a younger or older grouping.

Analysis of aspects of the structural features of the students' writing—ability to produce cohesive syntax, correct spelling, and appropriately applied punctuation—indicated a marked variability among individuals. Although there was considerable variability in the students' performance in the production of correct linguistic structures, all students demonstrated the acquisition of mature topic maintenance and production of functionally relevant, interactive written communication.

TOWARD THE ASSESSMENT OF COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE IN WRITING: AN ANALYSIS OF THE DIALOGUE JOURNAL WRITING OF JAPANESE ADULT ESL STUDENTS

ABSTRACT

Shelley P. Gutstein

This study provides a methodology for the assessment of communicative competence (CC) in dialogue journal writing, one instance of functional written language use. A dialogue journal is a written conversation in which two interlocutors communicate regularly over an extended period of time.

The dialogue journals from 18 adult Japanese students enrolled in a university ESL class provided the texts for analysis, development and validation of a methodology for the assessment of CC in writing. In dialogue journals students use language for functional, communicative purposes; therefore dialogue journals are a valid source of data for the analysis of CC.

In this study, three independent measures are used to assess communicative competence. The measures employed are: holistic assessments of communicative competence based on the students' dialogue journal writing, student grade point averages from all ESL classes taken during an intensive summer program, and an analysis of discourse topic features. The discourse topic analysis included: topic initiation,

topic continuation, topic recycling, topic content, and quantity of text as measured by a sentences per topic ratio.

Students were rated on each of the three measures and stratified into high, middle and low groups of equal size. Correlations between the measures were then determined. The holistic rankings and the GPAs correlated very highly (0.86), supporting the hypothesis that the GPAs assess students' communicative ability in addition to their proficiency in the traditional skill areas. There were also high correlations between all five discourse topic measures and the holistic scores and GPAs. These correlations suggest that discourse topic analysis is also a valid indicator of student communicative ability.

These findings provide baseline information about for discourse topic management skills of these students in dialogue journal writing. Further, the study demonstrates that the three measures, used in combination, provide a valid assessment of student communicative ability in interactive writing.

Implications of these results for three areas are discussed. First, the impact on communicative competence theory is reviewed. Second, implications of the findings for the assessment of communicative competence in writing are discussed. Last, applications of the results for classroom practice are suggested.

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Metalinguistic Activities in Spoken and Written Communicative Events

by

Richard A. Harrington

Dr. Dell Hymes, Supervisor

University of Pennsylvania, Graduate School of Education, 1988

This study deals with students' acquisition of a metalanguage for writing through the constant interplay of conversational processes, thus achieving a starting point for evaluative authority over their own written communication. Forty-seven representative eleventh and twelfth grade students, ranging from honors to remedial levels, participated in a writing center elective designed to engage students in metalinguistic activities in spoken and written communicative events. Students' written dialogue with the teacher about strategies used to compose and revise their written texts provides the principal data for the study.

The analysis of dialogic communication reveals students' potential for monitoring language processes that are at work in their writing and provides insight about how students acquire metalinguistic awareness. The term metalinguistic borrows from the wider linguistic field and has generally been used to mean language about language. Messages acquire metalinguistic character when some aspect of the language itself becomes the object or focus of thought. This process begins with, and stems from, interspeaker processes on the social dimension before they become realized as intraspeaker variations by the individual speaker/writer.

This study focuses on *emergent*, *dynamic* aspects of metalinguistic awareness. From linguistic theory (Jakobson, 1960) and sociolinguistic theory (Hymes, 1972), a provisional scheme of linguistic variables was compiled and applied to seven case studies. Five metalinguistic activities forming a descriptive typology suggest how students may begin to attend to their writing through a shared metalanguage. The activities include (1) *poetic* - monitoring the creative play of language, (2) *key* - monitoring voice, the spirit of self as writer, (3) *audience* - monitoring the initiative or responsive attention to the perceptions of an interlocutor, (4) *evaluation* - monitoring the specific attributions of language, focusing on the properties of the text, and (5) *setting* - monitoring the social and situational aspects of the speaking/writing event.

The study indicates that teachers can provide a context for metalinguistic awareness to enhance each stage of the writing process by using a social model for writing. This study suggests that a writer's evaluative autonomy first proceeds through interactive modes of communication before it can be realized intra-actively by the writer as an individual communicator.

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

DIALOGUE JOURNAL WRITING AND THE ACQUISITION OF GRAMMATICAL MORPHOLOGY IN ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

By

Joy Elaine Kreeft
Georgetown University, Washington, D.C.
October, 1984

This study investigated the acquisition of grammatical morphology in English as a second language as manifested in beginning ESL learners' dialogue journal writing. Dialogue journals are bound notebooks in which students and a teacher interact regularly in a written, informal "conversation."

Research questions related to the following issues: the degree of proficiency reached over ten months' time with the use of the morphemes studied; the uniformity of acquisition patterns among individual students and across the three sample periods; similarities between the findings of this study and previous studies of morpheme acquisition in ESL; linguistic factors constraining morpheme production in this written mode and the relationship between morpheme production in speech and writing.

The data for the study were the daily dialogue journal writing of five sixth grade students and their teacher over a period of ten months. The students were nonnative English speakers, who had been in the United States for less than one year when they began writing in the dialogue journals. Their first languages were Korean (2), Korean/Portuguese (1), Burmese (1), and Italian (1). Each student's dialogue journal consisted of around 100-150 interactions (one student entry and one teacher response equals one interaction). Three

samples of twenty interactions each were chosen for analysis. Both cross--sectional and longitudinal analyses were performed.

The cross-sectional analysis of rank orders for suppliance of the morphemes in obligatory contexts found a group rank order simliar to that established in previous studies, with some variation among individual students. The longitudinal analysis of factors influencing the production of each of the morphemes found a great deal of individual variation. The patterns for acquisition of grammatical morphology in a second language are seen therefore to result from an interaction of several factors: universal cognitive processes, features of the second language input, first language background, and strategies employed by individual learners. Factors involved in acquisition of forms in writing are seen to be similar to those involved in speech.

Implications for research on second language acquisition, educational practice, and particularly the use of dialogue journal writing to promote acquisition of the written forms of a second language were discussed.

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: Teacher-Student Dialogue Writing in a College Composition Course: Effects Upon Writing Performance and Attitudes.

Marsha Carow Markman, Doctor of Philosophy, 1983.

Dissertation directed by: Dr. John C. Carr, Professor
Department of Curriculum and Instruction
University of Maryland, College Park.

This study was designed to investigate the effects of the dialogue journal on the writing performance and attitudes of college composition students, and to analyze ways in which dialogue writing is used to fulfill individual student needs and course requirements. Its further purpose was to measure student and teacher attitudes toward this activity.

Each of five teachers taught two sections of a required professional writing course for students of junior standing at the University of Maryland, College Park. These ten classes provided treatment and control groups totaling 161 students.

All of the students in the sample responded to a writing attitude questionnaire at the beginning and at the end of the semester; and students in the treatment group along with their teachers, responded to dialogue journal attitude questionnaires at the end of the semester. In addition, pretest and posttest writing samples were composed by students in both groups and were scored using the Diederich Scale (Modified). Throughout the semester, the

treatment group participated weekly in a written dialogue with their teachers as a means for attending to course objectives and students' individual writing needs.

The results of the study revealed no statistically significant improvement in writing skills among students in the treatment group, within the limitations of the study's design. There was, however, observable improvement in the mean scores of one teacher's treatment class, which was significant in relation to results from the dialogue journal attitude questionnaires and the content analysis.

Analysis of the pretest and posttest writing attitude questionnaire revealed significant improvement (at an .08 level of significance) in attitudes about writing among students in the treatment group. In addition, the dialogue journal attitude questionnaires exhibited positive attitudes toward journal writing by students and teachers in the study.

A content analysis of a random sample of dialogue journals indicated the frequency to which teachers and students attended to writing process/performance and attitudes in their entries. A correlation of teacher-student comments within these categories, provides clues which link the dialogue journal with writing attitudes and performance.

ABSTRACT

Teacher Strategies: Linguistic Devices for Sustaining Interaction in Dialogue Journal Writing

Robby Morroy

This study describes teacher strategies as they are employed in dialogue journal writing and measures their relative effectiveness to achieve some of the goals of the interaction. Dialogue journals are notebooks in which students and their teacher engage in a daily, dyadic, written, informal, conversation throughout the school year.

Research issues included the strategies that can be identified in the dialogue journals; the students' response behavior; the linguistic characteristics of the students' responses at the syntactic, semantic and discourse levels; and the variation of these characteristics over ten months' time.

Although writing in the journals is only semi-voluntary, actual communication is completely voluntary. Getting students to write in their journals every day is definitely no guarantee for actual communication. The strategies that the teacher employs are seen as necessary tools to promote communication.

The journals of ten six-grade students formed the data base for the study. The students were a group of six nonnative English speakers who had been in the U.S.A. for less than one year at the start of the school year, and a group of four nonnative English speakers who had spent at least five years in U.S. schools when they started to write their journals. Three samples of twenty turn-exchanges each were selected for detailed analysis. The analyses carried out shed light on the effectiveness of strategies to achieve the goals the teacher aims at in the journals.

Three effectiveness categories were identified: HIGH, MEDIUM and LOW effective strategies. The majority of strategies, however, were found to be variably effective at the syntactic, semantic and discourse levels. Consistently HIGH effective strategies were politeness strategies, foreigner talk discourse strategies, and conversation techniques. The established turn-taking system in the dialogue journals had no effect on the effectiveness of strategies. An implicit theory for effective strategy use which determines the teacher's initial distribution of strategies was suggested. This theory was consequently adapted as a result of the actual effectiveness of strategies: strategies at or below average effectiveness were used below average frequency, while strategies above average effectiveness were used with any frequency.

Implications of the findings for a theory of discourse strategies, for educational practice, and for linguistic knowledge in general were discussed.

USING EXPRESSIVE WRITING TO SUPPORT THE LEARNING OF MATHEMATICS

Barbara J. Rose
University of Rochester
1989

ABSTRACT

This study explores, through both conceptual and empirical components, the role of exploratory or personal writing to support the learning of mathematics. Known as "expressive" writing, this mode of writing encourages students to think on paper rather than communicate information or persuade an audience, as is the case with most classroom writing.

A review of the literature on expressive writing and writing in mathematics and a conceptual analaysis based on a preliminary study are combined to identify (a) complementary ways in which expressive writing can be employed in mathematics instruction, and (b) a theoretical framework of potential benefits for the classroom along the three dimensions of student as writer, teacher as reader, and the student-teacher interaction.

The setting for the empirical component was a calculus course for business majors at a small private college. As the author taught this course, she used autobiographical narratives, in-class focused writing, and spontaneous dialogue journals and monitored them carefully. Qualitative research methods were used on both what the students wrote and what they said about the writing experience to ascertain the extent to which students took advantage of the hypothesized educational opportunities offered by expressive writing activities, wrote according to the categories proposed in the theoretical framework, and perceived the benefits suggested in the conceptualization. The results were

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reported through three in-depth case studies and a global analysis across the entire class.

The conceptual framework of potential benefits to the student as writer, teacher as reader, and student-teacher interaction was supported and elaborations made, as themes about individual differences and variables affecting the writing experience emerged from a triangulation of the data. Students wrote most often about their feelings about mathematics and the course, and less often about subject matter, their ways of doing mathematics, and their conception of mathematics. As the teacher attempted to provide various sources of support for the writing experiences and as the students grew into both their individual "need" and "style" of writing, however, students wrote about a wider range of topics and reported numerous ways in which the writing benefited their learning of mathematics.

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Acquiring Practical Reasoning Through Teacher-Student Interactions in Dialogue Journals

Jana Jo Staton

Doctor of Philosophy in Education

University of California, Los Angeles

Los Angeles, California

This study address the problem of how a teacher can help students acquire those concepts, beliefs, strategies and knowledge of themselves, other persons and the world on which rational deliberation and choices about action are based. Such practical reasoning is the heuristic, non-syllogistic rationality which characterizes human action. The thesis of this study is that practical reasoning is gradually acquired through extended interpersonal interactions with adults during which the child learns to observe and practice the relevant concepts and strategies for understanding and acting on the world. With many such opportunities, children are prepared for autonomy as adults.

The data for the analysis consist of the complete texts of 26 dialogue journals from a sixth grade class written during the 1979-1980 school year. Dialogue journals are private written conversations which occur daily in this class between each student and their teacher. The dialogue journal texts provide a unique record of the daily, spontaneous thinking of children about the important events of their lives. Methods

from discourse analysis and pragmatics were adapted and applied to the texts in order to describe and render intelligible the dialogic structure of these interactions. The dialogue journals are first described in their social context, as communicative events meeting a wide variety of student and teacher needs in the classroom. Then cross-sectional studies of specific features of the interactions across all journals, and longitudinal studies of individual student-teacher dialogues across the school year are presented.

The cross-sectional studies of elaboration and attributional reasoning demonstrate how the teacher's strategies for discussing everyday experiences differ systematically from those of her students. The students often do not elaborate or provide explicit details in their accounts of events, and so the teacher demonstrates and encourages them in this essential first step of describing and trying to explain in a more specific way what is happening. The teacher also confronts and challenges common misattributions students make. She provides the students with a useful, rational model of attributional beliefs, continually asserting the need for personal responsibility and effort.

The longitudinal studies each follow one major topic in a students' journal across the nine-month school year. These dialogues are instances of extended "interactional scaffolding" in which the teacher assists the student to re-examine problems from a different perspective, consider alternative actions, and incorporate new information and concepts helpful in that particular context. The first study, of one student's strategies ("Tai"), for discussing her interpersonal problems, describes how she acquires better strategies for expressing feelings, describing what happened, and reflecting on and evaluating her own actions. The second study, of a student's ("Gordon") understanding of the connection between his own actions and achievement in math, traces the students's changes in beliefs in response to the teacher's active intervention in guiding his perceptions and reasoning through the dialogue. These two intensive studies provide an empirical picture of the actual acquisition of more socially mature and effective reasoning capacities.

The journal demonstrates how students are first involved in playing the teacher's game of how to think about what happens, why things happen, and what their own actions or responses might be. Even if they do not always make the right choices, they are continuously involved in the structure of reasoning about choices and alternatives which the teacher creates. Implications for counseling practice and research, and for educational practice are considered throughout.

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